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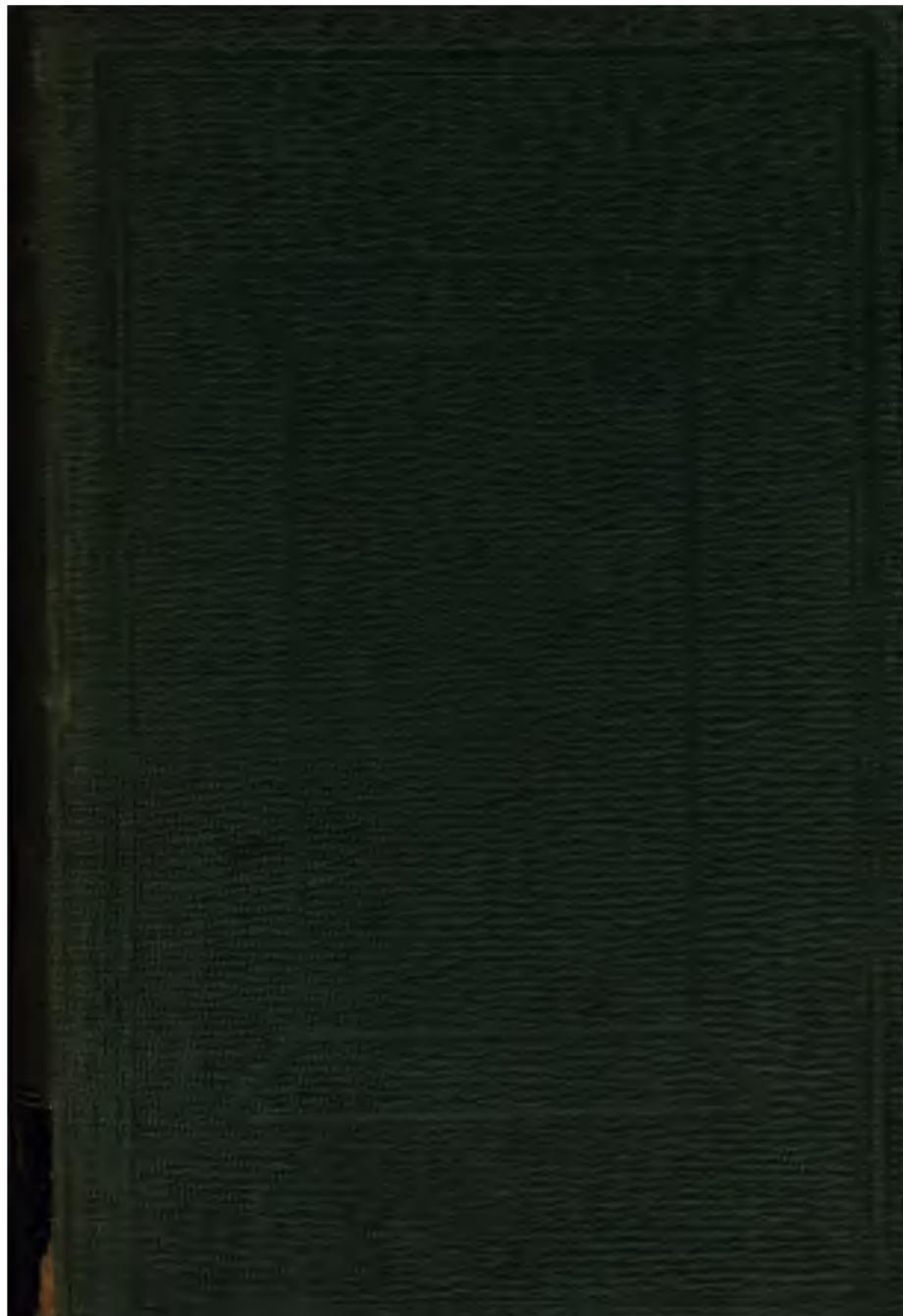
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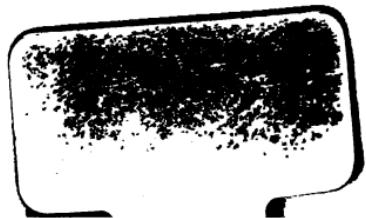
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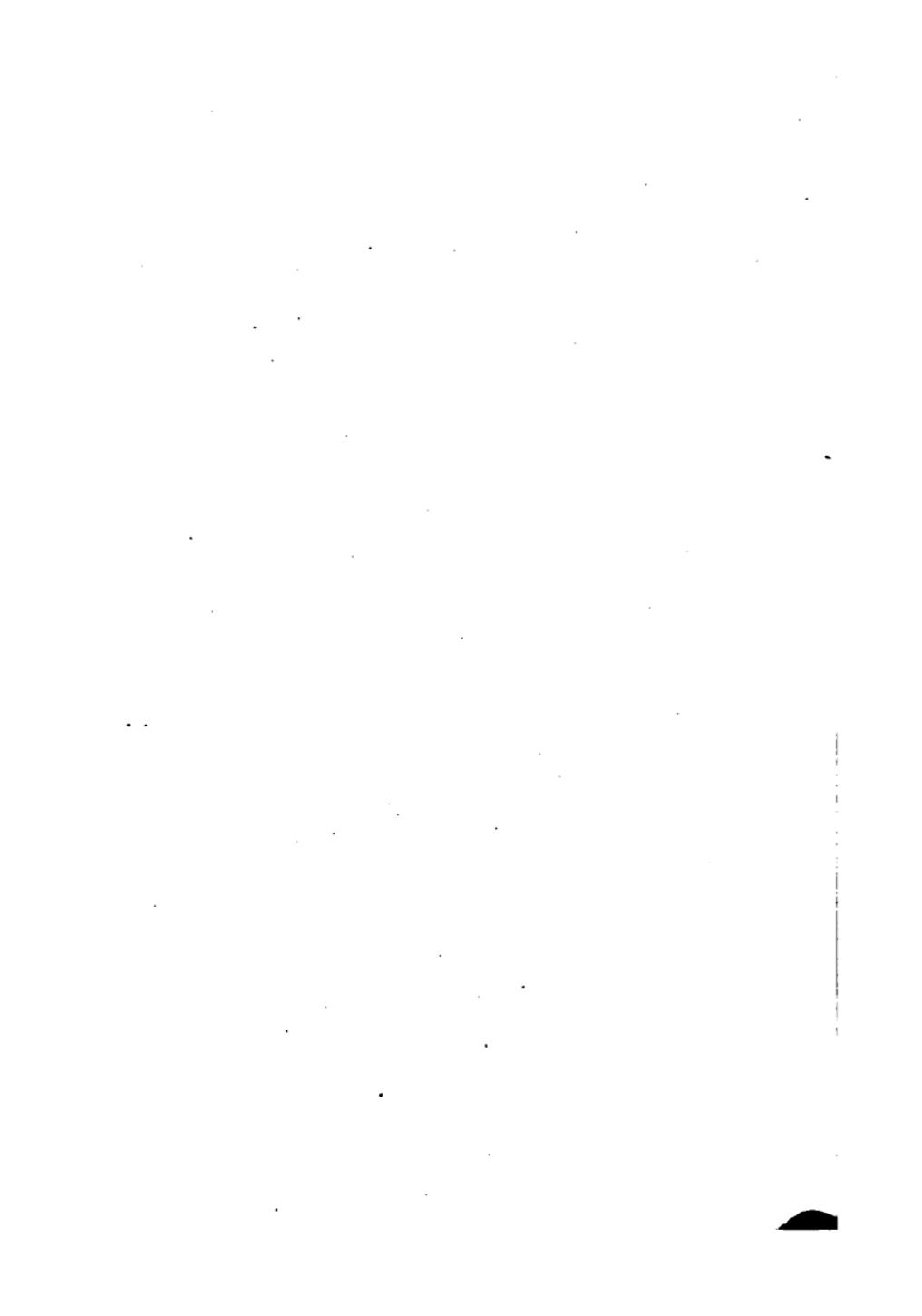
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Thoughts and Aphorisms

on

The Christian Life.

Edited by

The Rev. John Baillie,

Author of "Memoirs of Hewitson," "Adelaide Newton,"
"Missionary of Kilmany," etc.

"Enter into thy closet, and shut the door."

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James Nisbet and Co., Berners-street.

1857.

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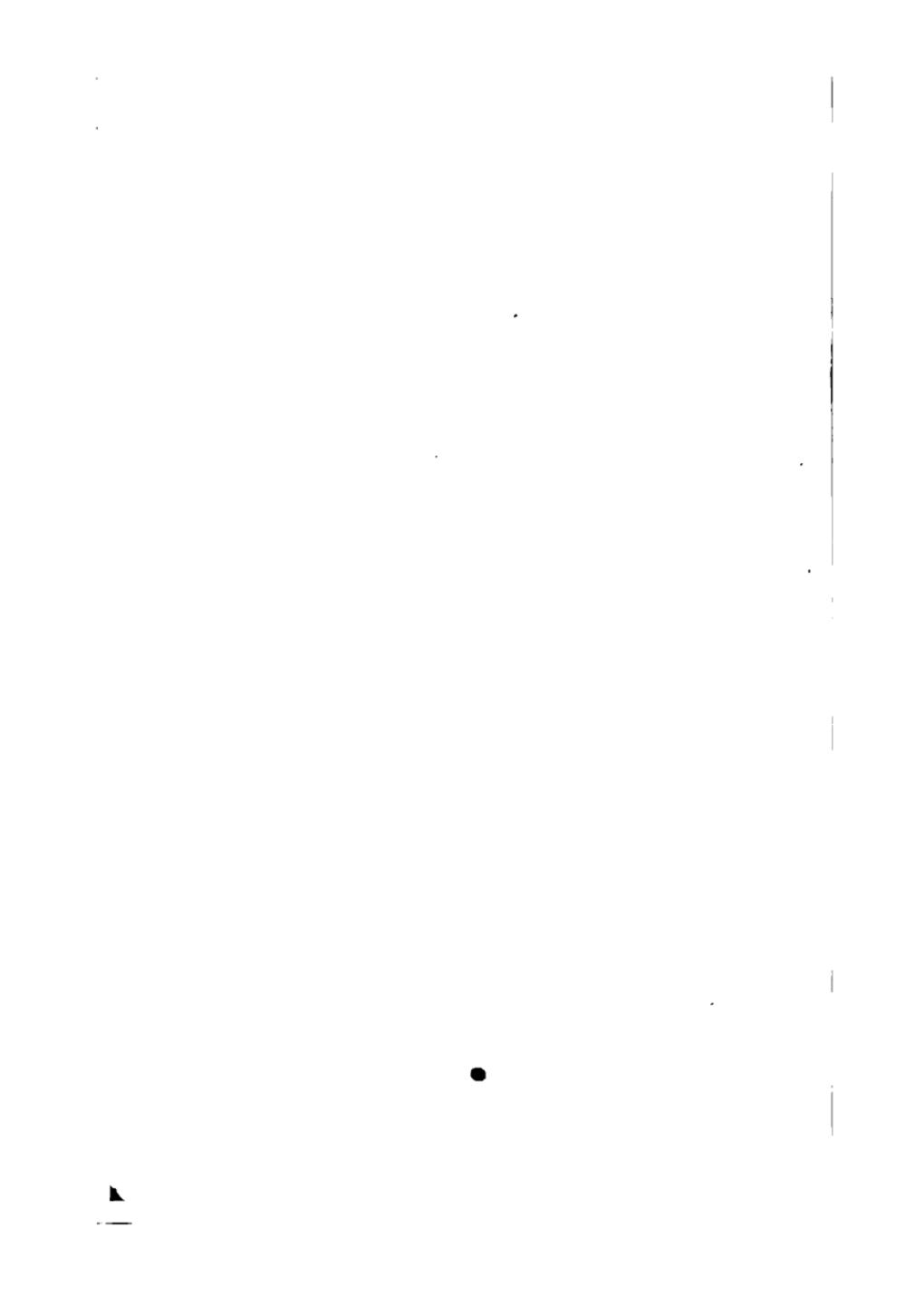
“THE LORD hath given me the tongue of the learned,
that I should know how to speak a word in
season to him that is weary.”—*The CHRIST*; in
Isa. l. 4.



THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS.

“ Off thy burdened heart is asking, ‘Can this discipline
be love?’
Does the very bruise of Satan really my adoption prove?’
Hush! e’en now thy Father, speaking, answers from the
heavenly land;
Tells thee how this deep affliction has proceeded from
His hand.
Hitherto thy lamentations have but drowned His tender
voice;
He, the God of power, commands thee in thy trial to
rejoice.
Fear no more, for He is with thee; check each murmur,
and be still:
He shall show thee how to *suffer*, how to do, His
righteous will.”

—AUTHOR OF *Protoplasm*.



PREFATORY NOTE.

To "sit still without being idle," is the daily problem of the Christian life. The tendency of this age is to substitute activities for quiet "waiting upon God." The consequence is, we do not give place within us to "the operation of God;" we make too much haste: And thus we grow weak—we do not gain that nerve of soul which alone can fit for doing or for enduring worthily.

The Editor lately saw for the first time the Thoughts here published. Himself not a little profited by them, and deeming

them suited to the existing want of the day, he desired to share with his brethren the blessing which they had brought to him. If we are to work to any purpose, we *must* give time to lonely fellowship with our God.

LONDON,

December 20, 1856.

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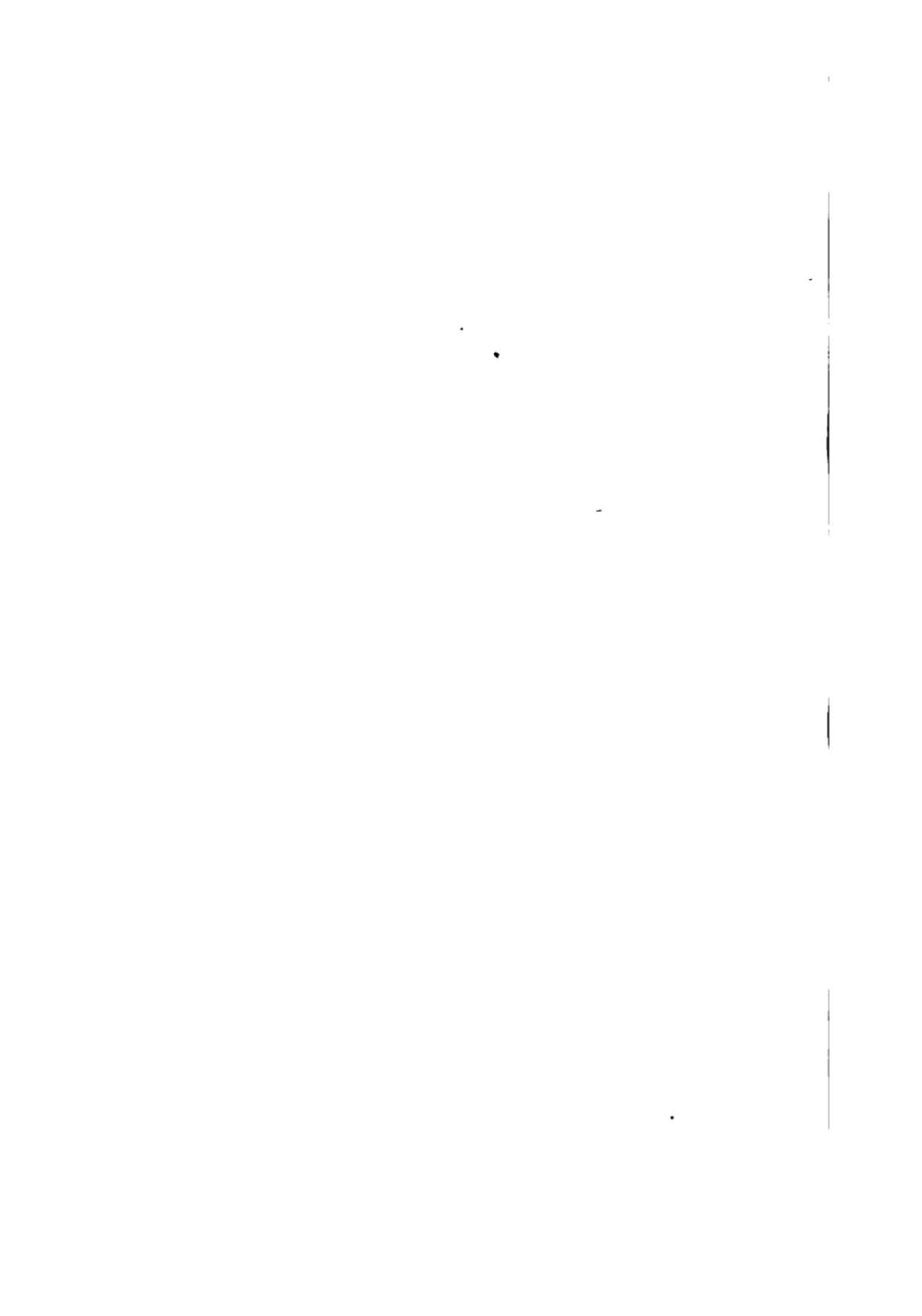
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In a town in Lombardy there lived, two centuries ago, a man of high lineage in the country which had given him birth. Early emigrating from Spain to Northern Italy, MICHAEL DE MOLINOS entered the priesthood as the way which seemed most open for consecrating his life to the service of that Lord who by this time had called him to Himself. Not long afterwards, his holy, earnest life, and his burning words, attracted to him many eyes. The people began to listen with intense interest to tidings so new and so gladdening. Declining ecclesiastical preferment, which his high rank had often placed within his reach, he devoted himself

to the Lord's work with a self-sacrificing zeal which the formalists of Rome could not brook. His followers were persecuted, and he himself was summoned before the Inquisition.

Among the crimes laid to his charge was the publication, at Venice, in 1675, of a brief treatise on the soul's hidden life. Its object was to urge the necessity of a heavenly walk, and especially of secret prayer. Making little account of the austerities and ceremonials of Romanism, the book was not one to be lightly passed over; and accordingly its author, after a series of harassing persecutions, was condemned to be imprisoned for life in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

As he was conducted to his cell, his countenance (we are informed) was pleasant and serene; and he entered it with the utmost tranquillity, calling it his "cabinet." When the monk who had accompanied him was taking leave, Molinos looked mildly but steadily at him, and said, "Farewell, father; we shall meet again at the day of judgment; and then it will appear on whose side truth

has been—whether on yours or on mine." The martyr lived in the Inquisition, on bread and water, twenty-eight years, and then fell asleep in Jesus.

Not many books have been baptized with such a baptism. The thoughts are annealed in the furnace-fire; and they are not unworthy of their origin.

It is affecting, however, to trace the vestiges of human infirmity even on scenes the most holy. Emancipated from the thraldom of a mere outward religionism, Molinos, not unnaturally, communicated to his writings a certain tinge of mystic quietism.

The one grand method of attaining true heavenliness is, a daily and steadfast and believing contemplation of CHRIST—Christ crucified, risen, sitting "in the heavenlies" at his Father's right hand, the appointed "heir of all things." Paul's one aim was, to "know HIM;" and, in knowing Him, he unconsciously entered, with an ever intenser vividness, into his own standing as a partaker of Christ and of Christ's resurrection-life. The effect of this was to turn the soul's eye, away from itself and from its own

exercises, outward upon Christ as revealed by the Spirit in the Word.

Whatever, in these thoughts of Molinos, tends to obscure that great fundamental truth, we have deemed it our duty to omit. That he himself was not a mystic, one quotation will show:—"I should never look at myself, but walk with eyes shut, *leaning on my Beloved*, without striving to see or know the way in which He guides me, neither beg any particular favour, but, as entirely undone in myself, rest wholly on Him." Still there are the grave-clothes about him; and we have "loosed him and let him go." Had he lived under happier auspices, he would have needed no stranger-hand to remove the cerements.

During the years that Molinos, in Italy, was thinking out these great thoughts on the soul's conflicts and triumphs, the seer of Bedford was delineating the same warfare in his immortal "Pilgrim." Bunyan lived in the broad daylight of the Gospel; Molinos only in its twilight haze: hence the fuller and clearer manifestation, in the "Pilgrim," of the Christian's grand mainspring of peace,

and joy, and heavenliness. But the delineation of the conflict is strikingly the same in both. Let the reader of these pages, at any point where they may not command his entire sympathy, turn his eye to the stunned wayfarer in the "Valley of Humiliation" or of the "Shadow of Death," or in his conflict with Apollyon, or in Doubting Castle, and he will learn how truly each was taught by the Spirit the mysteries of the inner life.

PRELIMINARY.

THIS book is but little adapted to the taste of the age, and is therefore most likely to appear insipid, and to be ridiculed by the generality of the world. But, O friend Reader, if thou understandest it not, do not on that account make thy scoff at it. If thou condemnest these things, thou rankest thyself amongst the wise men of this world, who are ignorant of this wisdom; which is given by the Almighty to the simple and humble, who are generally looked upon as the most ignorant.

The true inner life is not a science of imagination, but of experience; it is not an invention, but a matter to be felt; it is not

acquired by study, but is received from Heaven. It is this which renders it so sure, efficacious, beneficial, and abundant in fruits. It enters not into the soul by the ears, or by much reading of books, but by the liberal or free infusion of the Spirit of God, which communicates itself to the simple and lowly-minded, in the most inward and delightful manner. Many learned men have never read anything on this subject; and there are many professors who have felt nothing of it. This makes them both condemn it; the former through ignorance, and the latter for want of experience.

It is certain that those who have no experience of these sweet things can form no judgment of such mysterious secrets, and are offended to hear any speak of the wonderful effects which Divine love produces in the soul, because they do not experience them in themselves. But who shall set bounds to the goodness of God? as if His arm was shortened, and as if He could not do the same now as He has formerly done! God has no regard to human merit when He calls mankind. He chooses neither the

strong, nor the rich, but the weakest and most miserable souls, that He may display His infinite mercy so much the more.

I have endeavoured to render the style of this book simple, chaste, and useful, not having used the ornaments of far-fetched phrases, ostentatious eloquence, or the subtleties of theology; my design being only to teach the naked truth with humility, sincerity, clearness, and perspicuity.

Do not wonder that there are so many new spiritual books continually published; because God has always new lights to communicate, and souls have need to be continually instructed. Everything has not yet been said or written, and there will be new books to the end of the world.

The difficulties which are found in the inner life, however great and numerous they are, should not discourage any: it is but just, that a prize of so great value should cost some trouble. Take courage, then! Divine grace, and the inward strength it communicates, will enable you to overcome every obstacle, whether within or without.

For this purpose, then, it is, that I have

designed this book ; and I hope (through the goodness of God) that some advancing souls, whom He calls to this sublime science, may reap the fruits of my labour.

SUMMARY OF THE FOLLOWING WORK.

OBSERVATION I.

THE more independent we are of the creatures, the more we depend on God and on His secret inspirations ; and, by the means of pure faith, our love is more constant, ardent, and durable. All whatever the world and the men of greatest capacities can say, is a mere nothing ; the goodness and beauty of our Beloved infinitely surpasses all their thoughts ; the creatures are too gross to serve as masters or guides to the knowledge of God.

Though the soul finds itself barren and full of darkness, yet let it not be disquieted, but remain tranquil, firm, and steady, whilst God works in it. Though this state appears

to be inactive, it is only so with regard to its own sensible activity, and not with regard to God, who then is acting and working in it the true knowledge of Himself. The more the soul is led on, the more it is detached from sensible objects.

OBSERVATION II.

Prayer is an elevation of the mind to God. As He is above all creatures, the soul cannot see Him, nor commune with Him, unless it be raised above them.

When the mind attentively considers the mysteries of faith, endeavouring to penetrate into their truth, considering all their particulars, and weighing all their circumstances, in order to make an impression on the will;—this manner of reasoning is properly called *meditation*.

When the soul knows the truth, and so fixes its sight upon it, beholding it with a sincere heart, in repose and silence, its will loving, admiring, and rejoicing in the possession of it;—this state of the soul is *contemplation*.

To remain peaceful and silent, with a

simple and an affectionate eye to God, and gently repelling such vain imaginations as may present themselves ; appeasing its troubles by the presence of God ; fixing its thoughts upon Him, and contenting itself with the general knowledge given to it of God by faith, and so turning its will to love Him ;—these are the blessed fruits which only are produced by contemplation.

Cast yourself into the loving arms of God, and He will increase the ardour and zeal wherewith you love Him, which is unspeakably more valuable than all your own self-activities whatever.

What we know of God in this life is but of little value ; but the affection and love of the will is of great worth.

The soul in contemplation is full of joy, and knows not why. It burns with love, and comprehends not how it loves. It knows that it enjoys the object of its love, without knowing how it possesses it ; though it conceives very well that this enjoyment is a happiness greater than what its understanding can desire. The will is inflamed, knows not what inflames it ; but though

it cannot comprehend it, it proves that it is a blessing, which all the works of men put together could never merit, nor all the sufferings in the world could ever obtain. It is a gift from Heaven, a gift of the Lord himself, who communicates, and gives Himself to whom He pleases, and as He pleases. In this state it is God that does all; it is his own work, which surpasses all the powers of nature.

OBSERVATION III.

The way of inward peace is in all things to be conformed to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine will. *In all things we ought to submit our will to God: for the peace of our own will consists in its being always conformed to the perfect will of God.* Such as would have all things succeed and come to pass according to their own fancy, are not come to know this way, and therefore lead a harsh and bitter life, always restless and out of humour, without walking in the way of peace, which consists in a total conformity to the will of God.

This conformity is the sweet yoke that

introduces us into the regions of eternal peace and serenity. Hence we may know that the rebellion of our will is the chief occasion of all our disquiet, and that, because we will not submit to the sweet yoke of the Divine will, we suffer so many straits and perturbations. Oh! if we did but submit our own wills to the Divine will, and to all its disposals, what tranquillity should we feel! what sweet peace! what inward serenity! what supreme felicity and foretastes of blessedness! That is my scope and intention in this book: may it please God to give me his Divine light!

CHAPTER I.

In order that God may rest in the soul, the heart should always be kept peaceable, in whatsoever disquiet, temptations, and tribulation.

THOU art to know that thy soul is the habitation of God. And, therefore, to the end the Sovereign King may rest on this throne of thy soul, thou oughtest to take pains to keep it clean, quiet, void, and peaceable; clean from guilt and defects; quiet from fears; and peaceable in temptations and tribulations.

Thou oughtest always, then, to keep thine heart in peace, that thou mayest keep pure that temple of God, and with a right and pure intention thou art to work, pray, obey, and suffer, without being in the least moved, whatever it pleases the Lord to send unto thee; because it is certain, that, for the good of the soul, and for thy spiritual profit, He will suffer the envious enemy to trouble that city of rest and throne of peace with temptations, suggestions, and tribulations,

and, by the means of creatures, with painful troubles and grievous persecutions. Be constant, and cheer up thine heart in whatsoever disquiet these tribulations may cause to thee.

All thy protection is to be prayer. When thou art more faint-hearted, betake thyself to this refuge of prayer—the only armour for overcoming the enemy and mitigating tribulation. Thou oughtest not to be at a distance from it in a storm, to the end thou mayest, as another Noah, experience tranquillity, security, and serenity, in order that thy will may be resigned, devoted, peaceful, and courageous.

Finally, Be not afflicted nor discouraged to see thyself abased; compose thyself, because the Lord will return unto thee, and He will be alone with thee, to rest in thy soul, and form therein a rich throne of peace, that so within thine own heart thou mayest look for silence in tumult, solitude in company, light in darkness, forgetfulness in pressures, vigour in despondency, courage in fear, resistance in temptation, peace in war, and quiet in tribulation.

CHAPTER II.

The soul, though empty, ought to persevere in prayer, and not be afflicted.

THOU wilt find thyself full of confusion and doubts, because in prayer thou hast failed in discourse. It will seem to thee that God does no more assist thee as formerly—that the exercise of prayer is not in thy power—that thou losest time, whilst hardly and with great trouble thou canst make one single ejaculation as thou wast wont to do.

How much confusion and what perplexities will that want of enlarging thyself in mental discourse raise in thee !

Thou oughtest, then, to be persuaded that thou mayest not draw back, when thou wantest expansion and discourse in prayer. The Lord will have thee to walk by faith and silence in his Divine presence, as an innocent child that casts itself into the sweet and safe bosom of its dear mother. I could never find anything more efficacious nor compendious for attaining to theology

than that our spirit should become like a child or like a beggar in the presence of God.

When God had a mind to instruct his own captain, *Moses* (Exod. xxiv.), and give him the two tables of the law, written in stone, He called him up to the mountain, at which time, God being there with him, the mount was darkened and environed with thick clouds,—Moses standing idle, not knowing what to think or say. Seven days after, God commanded Moses to come up to the top of the mountain, wherein He showed him his glory, and filled him with great consolation.

So God makes the soul pass through darkness and dryness that He may bring it near to Himself; because the Divine Majesty knows very well that it is not by the means of one's own industry that a soul draws near to Him and understands the Divine documents, but rather by silent and humble resignation.

The patriarch Noah gave a great instance of this—who, after he had been by all men reckoned a fool, floating in the middle of a

raging sea wherewith the whole world was overflowed, without sails and oars, and environed with wild beasts that were shut up in the ark, walked by faith alone, not knowing, not understanding, what God had a mind to do with him.

What most concerns thee, oh, redeemed soul ! is patience, not to desist from the prayer thou art about, though thou canst not enlarge in discourse. Walk with firm faith and a holy silence, dying in thyself, with all thy natural industry, trusting that God, who is the same and changes not, neither can err, intends nothing but thy good.

If thou wouldest be happy and wise, be silent and believe—suffer and have patience —be confident and walk on ; it concerns thee far more to hold thy peace, and to let thyself be guided by the hand of God, than to enjoy all the goods of this world. And though it seem to thee that thou dost nothing at all, and art idle, being so dumb and resigned, yet it is of infinite fruit.

Who would not think, during so long a time that the seed lies in the earth, but that

it were lost? Yet afterwards it is seen to spring up, grow, and multiply. God does the same with the soul: whilst it thinks it does nothing, and is in a manner undone, in time it comes to itself again, improved, disengaged, and perfect, having never hoped for so much favour.

Take care, then, that thou afflict not thyself, nor draw back, though thou canst not enlarge thyself and discourse in prayer; suffer, hold thy peace, and appear in the presence of God; persevere constantly, and trust to his infinite bounty, who can give unto thee constant faith, true light, and Divine grace. Put thyself into his kind and paternal hands, resolving to do nothing but what his Divine will and pleasure is.

Manifest it is, that it is a great martyrdom, and no small gift of God, for the soul, when it findeth itself deprived of the sensible pleasures it had, to walk by holy faith only through the dark and desert paths. Wherefore, endeavour to be constant and not draw back; though discourse be wanting to thee in prayer, believe at that time firmly; be quietly silent, and patiently persevere.

CHAPTER III.

The soul is not to afflict itself nor intermit prayer because it sees itself encompassed with dryness.

THOU shalt know that there are two sorts of prayer, the one tender, delightful, amiable, and full of sentiments ; the other obscure, dry, desolate, tempted, and darksome. God gives the first to gain souls, the second to purify them. With the first He uses them like children ; with the second he begins to deal with them as with strong men.

Assure thyself that dryness or aridity is the instrument of thy good, because it puts a stop to the flight of almost all spiritual men, and makes them even draw back, and leave off prayer—as may be seen in many souls, which only persevere whilst they taste sensible consolation.

Know that the Lord makes use of the veil of dryness, to the end that we may not know what He is working in us, and so be humble; because if we felt and knew what He is work-

ing in our souls, satisfaction and presumption would get in, imagining that we were doing some good thing, and reckoning ourselves very near to God—which would be our undoing.

Thou oughtest not, then, to afflict thyself, nor think that thou reapest no fruit, because in coming away from prayer thou hast not the experience of many delicious sentiments. The husbandman sows in one time and reaps in another: so God, upon occasions, and in his own due time, will help thee to resist temptations, and, when least thou thinkest, will give thee holy purposes and more effectual desires of serving him. And to the end thou mayest not suffer thyself to be transported by the violent suggestion of the enemy—who will enviously persuade thee that thou dost nothing, and that thou losest time, that so thou mayest neglect prayer,—I will declare to thee some of the infinite fruits that thy soul reaps from that great dryness.

Thou wilt find, when thou art about to commit any evil, an aversion or shrinking back in thy heart, which restrains thee from the

execution of it, and at other times from speaking, lamenting, or revenging thyself—that it will take thee off from this or the other occasion, or conversation, into which formerly thou wast running in great peace and security without the least check or remorse of conscience.

After that through frailty thou hast fallen into some light fault, thou wilt feel a reproof for it in thy soul, which will exceedingly afflict thee.

Thou wilt feel within thyself desires of suffering and of doing the will of God.

Thou wilt be sensible of greater peace in thy soul, love to humility and mortification, confidence in God, submission, and abstraction from all creatures ; and, finally, the sins thou hast omitted since the time thou exercisedst thyself in prayer, are so many signs that the Lord is working in thy soul (though thou knowest it not) by means of dry prayer; and although thou feelest it not whilst thou art in prayer, thou wilt feel it in his due time, when He shall think it fit.

All these, and many other fruits, are like new buds that spring from the prayer which

thou wouldst give over, because it seems to thee to be dry, because thou seest no fruit of it, nor reapest no advantage therefrom. Be constant and persevere with patience; for, though thou knowest it not, thy soul is profited thereby.

CHAPTER IV.

A description of two kinds of devotion.

THERE are two kinds of devotion. The one is, a readiness of mind to do good, to keep the commands of God and whatever relates to his service ; though, instead of gusts, tears, and sweet pleasant sensations, it may be accompanied with darkness, temptations, and dryness. The other is, when to good desires there are joined meltings of heart, shedding of tears, and other sensible effects.

Many imagine, when they experience those sensible sweetneses, that they are the favourites of God, and that then they truly possess Him ; and so they pass all their lives in seeking after these sensible delights : but these are often consolations of nature, caused by its own reflections and self-admirings ; therefore make little account of them, leaving yourselves to be led forward by the Lord, who will be your light in the midst of darkness and dryness.

Nor by any means think, when you in

faith and silence are thus (as to sense) dry and dark in the presence of God, that you do nothing, that you lose time, and that you are slothful. The greatest sloth consists in not attending to the voice of God—in not waiting upon Him,—whereas this tranquil silence or quiet in God's presence is the work of works—the greatest and most excellent work that the soul can be employed in: as the case of Mary at Christ's feet plainly shows, by what He said of her, viz., *Mary hath chosen the better part.*

It must not therefore be said that the soul is idle when its own acts are silent; because, though it works not actively, yet the Holy Ghost operates in it. To be attentive to God, and draw near to Him ; to reverence Him with the pious affections of the will, to cast away such multitudes of fantastical imaginations, and, with composure of mind and contempt, to overcome so many temptations as frequently occur in time of prayer;—all these, I say, are true acts, though simple, entirely spiritual, and, in a manner, imperceptible, through the great tranquillity wherewith the soul exerts them.

CHAPTER V.

The soul is not to be disquieted when it finds itself encompassed with darkness.

THERE are two sorts of darkness; the one wretched, the other blessed. The first is that which arises from sin, and is wretched; the second is that which the Lord suffers to be in the soul, to ground and settle it in virtue. Thou oughtest (at that time) to persevere constantly in prayer. By this means God introduces the soul into the prayer of rest.

What thou oughtest to do in the midst of darkness is, to believe that thou art before the Lord, and in his presence; but this thou oughtest to do with a sweet and quiet attention,—not desiring to search after delicacies, tendernesses, or sensible devotions, nor to do anything but what is the goodwill and pleasure of God.

God will set his hand to the purging of thy evil inclinations, inordinate desires, vain complacency, self-love, and pride, and all

other hidden vices, which thou knowest not, and which yet reign in the inner parts of thy soul.

Thou wilt never attain to this, though thou tire thyself out with the external acts of mortification and resignation, until the Lord purge thee inwardly, and discipline thee after his own way; because He alone knows how secret faults are to be purged out. If thou constantly persevere, He will not only purge thee from affections and engagements to natural and temporal goods, but in his own time also He will purify thee from the supernatural and sublime, such as inward raptures and ecstacies, on which the soul rests and enjoys itself.

God will do all this in thy soul by means of the cross and dryness, if thou freely givest thy consent to it by resignation. All thou hast to do, is to do nothing by thy own choice alone, quietly resigning thyself up in everything whereby the Lord shall think fit internally and externally to mortify thee.

The husbandman sets a greater esteem upon the plants which he sows in the ground, than upon those that spring up of them-

selves, because these never come to seasonable maturity. In the same manner God esteems, and is better pleased with, the virtue which He sows in the soul, than all the other virtues which the soul pretends to acquire by its own election and endeavours.

It concerns thee only, then, that thine heart should be prepared like clean paper, whereon the Divine wisdom may imprint characters to his own liking.

With new efforts thou must exercise thyself, but in another manner than hitherto, giving thy consent to receive the secret and Divine operations, and to be polished and purified by the Lord.

Thou wilt experience that the creatures will forsake thee, nay, those too from whom thou hopedst for most favour and compassion in thy straits; the brooks of thy faculties will be so dried up, that thou shalt not be able so much as to conceive a good thought of God. Heaven will seem to thee to be of brass, and thou shalt receive no light from it. Nor will the thought comfort thee, that in times past so much light and

devout consolation have shined into thy soul.

The invisible enemies will pursue thee with scruples, lascivious suggestions, and unclean thoughts, with incentives to impatience, pride, rage, cursing. Thou wilt find a great lukewarmness, loathing, and weariness with the things of God; an obscurity and darkness in thy understanding; a faintness, confusion, and narrowness of heart; such a coldness and feebleness of the will to resist, that a straw will appear to thee a beam. Thy desertion will be so great, that thou wilt think there is no more a God for thee, and that thou art rendered incapable of entertaining a good desire; so that thou wilt continue shut up betwixt two walls, in constant straits and anguish, without any hopes of ever getting out of so dreadful an oppression.

But fear not: all this is necessary for purging thy soul and making it know its own misery, and sensibly to perceive the annihilation of all the passions and disordinate appetites, wherewith it rejoiced itself.

CHAPTER VI.

The soul ought not to be disquieted, nor drawn back in the spiritual way, because it finds itself assaulted by temptations.

OUR own nature is so base, proud, and ambitious, and so full of its own appetites, its own judgment, and opinions, that, if temptations restrained it not, it would be undone without remedy. The Lord, then, seeing our misery and perverse inclination, and thereby moved to compassion, suffers us to be assaulted by divers thoughts against the faith, by horrible temptations, and by violent and painful suggestions of impatience, pride, gluttony, luxury, rage, blasphemy, cursing, despair, and an infinite number of others, to the end we may know ourselves and be humble. With these horrible temptations it is that infinite goodness humbles our pride, giving us in them the most wholesome medicine.

Therefore the Lord purifies the soul which He calls and will have for himself, with the

rough file of temptation, with which He polishes it from the rust of pride, avarice, vanity, ambition, presumption, and self-conceitedness. With the same He humbles, pacifies, and exercises it, making it to know its own misery. By means thereof He purifies and strips the heart, to the end all its operations may be pure and of inestimable value.

That thou mayest not lose internal peace, it is necessary thou believe that it is the goodness of Divine mercy, when thus it humbles, afflicts, and tries thee; since by this means thy soul comes to have a deep knowledge of itself, reckoning itself the worst, most impious, and abominable of all souls living, and hence with humility and lowliness it abhors itself. Oh, how happy would souls be, if they would be quiet, and believe that all these temptations are caused by the devil, and received from the hand of God, for their gain and spiritual profit!

But thou wilt say that it is not the work of the devil, when he molests thee by means of creatures, but the effect of thy

neighbours' faults and malice, in having wronged and injured thee. Know that this is another cunning and hidden temptation; because, though God wills not the sin of another, yet He wills his own effects in thee, and the trouble which accrues to thee from another's faults, that He may see thee improved by the benefit of patience.

Dost thou receive an injury from any man? There are two things in it,—the sin of him that does it, and the punishment that thou sufferest: the sin is against the will of God, and displeases Him, though He permit it; the punishment is accordant with his will, and He wills it for thy good; wherefore thou oughtest to receive it as from his hand. The passion and death of our Lord Christ were the effects of the wickedness and sins of Pilate, and yet it is certain that God willed the death of his own Son for our redemption.

Consider how the Lord makes use of other people's faults for the good of thy soul. Oh, the greatness of the Divine wisdom, who can see into the depth of the

secret and extraordinary means and the hidden paths whereby He guides the soul, which He would have purged, transformed, and sanctified.

CHAPTER VII.

Wherein the same point is handled.

THAT the soul may be the habitation of the celestial King, the Lord purifies it as gold in the furnace of terrible and grievous temptation. Certain it is, that the soul never loves nor believes more than when it is afflicted and baited with such temptations; because those doubtings and fears that beset it, whether it believes or not, whether it consents or not, are nothing else but the artifices of love.

The effects that remain in the soul make this very clear; and commonly these are a loathing of itself, with a most profound acknowledgment of the greatness and omnipotence of God, a great confidence in the Lord that He will deliver it from all risk and danger; believing and confessing with far greater vigour of faith that it is God who gives it strength to bear the torments of these temptations, because it would naturally be impossible, considering the force

and violence wherewith sometimes they attack, to resist one quarter of an hour.

Thou art to know, then, that the more temptation besets thee, the more thou oughtest to rejoice in peace. In all those temptations and odious thoughts, the most salutary remedy is to despise them with a steady neglect, because nothing more afflicts the proud devil than to see that he is slighted and despised with all the things that he suggests to us. And therefore thou art to possess thyself in thy peace, without repining, and without multiplying reasons and answers ; seeing nothing is more dangerous than to pretend to reason with him who is ready to deceive thee.

The saints, in arriving at holiness, passed through this doleful Valley of Temptations ; and the greater saints they were, the greater temptations they grappled with. Nay, after the saints have attained to holiness and perfection, the Lord suffers them to be tempted with sharp temptations, that their crown may be the greater, and that the spirit of vain-glory may be checked, or else hindered from entering into them, keeping them in

that manner secure, humble, and careful about their state.

Finally, thou art to know that the greatest temptation is to be without temptation; wherefore thou oughtest to resist it with resignation, peace, and constancy: because, if thou wilt serve God, thou must pass through the rugged path of temptation; put on this weighty solid armour; fight in this fierce and cruel war; and in this burning furnace polish, purge, renew, and purify thyself.

CHAPTER VIII.

Declaring how the soul ought to behave itself in the spiritual warfare whereby the devil endeavours to disturb it.

IN the presence of God, thou oughtest to be accustomed to recollect thyself with an affectionate attention, as one that is given up to God, with reverence, humility, and submission, without any distinct view of any perfection or attribute; but resigning and delivering thyself up into his hands, to the end He may dispose of thee according to his good will and pleasure; without reflecting on thyself; trusting God with all the care of thy welfare, remitting unto Him the affairs of this life.

No sooner wilt thou have given thyself up to thy Lord in this way but all hell will conspire against thee; seeing one single soul retired to God's presence makes greater war against the enemy than a thousand others that walk externally.

The best thing that is to be done is

peaceably to make an offering to God of the trouble. Though thou canst not get rid of the anguish of these thoughts, hast no light, comfort, nor spiritual sentiments ; yet be not afflicted, because this is the snare of the enemy. Resign thyself with vigour, endure with patience, and persevere in God's presence ; for whilst thou perseverest after this manner, thy soul will be profited.

Dost thou believe that when thou comest away from prayer dry, in the same manner as thou didst begin, that it hath done thee no good ? This is a mistake ; because the fruit of true prayer consists in enduring with patience, and in persevering in faith and silence, believing that thou art in the Lord's presence, turning to Him thy heart with tranquillity and purity of mind.

Invisible enemies will assault thee with continual suggestions, to trouble and disquiet thee. Nature herself will likewise torment thee, she being always an enemy to the spirit, which, in depriving her of sensible pleasures, leaves her weak, melancholy, and full of irksomeness, so that she feels a hell in all spiritual exercises, particu-

larly in that of prayer; hence she grows extremely impatient to be at an end of it, through the uneasiness of thoughts, the lassitude of body, importunate sleep, and want of power to curb the senses, every one of which would gladly follow its own pleasure. Happy art thou, if thou canst persevere amidst this martyrdom. This is an offering up of one's-self in a whole burnt-sacrifice.

As many times as thou exercisest thyself calmly to reject these vain thoughts, so many crowns will the Lord set upon thy head: and though it may seem to thee that thou doest nothing, be undeceived; for a good desire, with firmness and steadfastness in prayer, is very pleasing to the Lord.

Wherefore, to be here is not lost time, but of great gain, whilst one toils without selfishness, and merely for the glory of God: and though it may seem to be toiling in vain, yet it is not so; but it is as with children, who toil and labour for their father's pleasure, and who, though in the evening they receive not the wages for their day's work, yet at the year's end enjoy all.

CHAPTER IX.

A continuation of the same matter.

God does not love him most who does most, who hears most, or who has most sensible meltings, but him who suffers most, if he pray with faith and reverence, believing that he is in the Divine presence. It is true, that to take from the soul the prayer of the senses and of nature is a rigorous martyrdom to it; but the Lord rejoices, and is well pleased, if it keeps quiet and resigned.

God hath no regard to the multitude of words, but to the purity of the intent. His greatest content and glory at this season is to see the soul desirous, humble, quiet, and resigned. Proceed, persevere, pray; for where thou findest no sensibilities, thou wilt find a door whereby thou mayest know thyself to be nothing—that thou canst do nothing—nay, and that thou hast not so much as a good thought.

How many have begun this happy practice, and have left it off, alleging that they

felt no pleasure, that they lost time, that their thoughts troubled them, and that such prayer was not for them ; whereas they might have believed, and had patience ; and therefore all these excuses are no more but with ingratitude to hunt after sensible pleasures, such persons suffering themselves to be transported with self-love, seeking themselves, and not God, because they cannot suffer a little pain and dryness ; not considering the infinite loss they sustain ; whereas, by the least act of reverence towards God amidst dryness and sterility, they receive an eternal reward.

A quarter of an hour of prayer, with resignation and humility, does more good to the soul than five days of penitential exercises, haircloths, disciplines, fastings, and sleeping on bare boards, because these are only mortifications of the body, whereas by the other the soul is purified.

Constant prayer consists in keeping the heart always upright towards God ; the soul, to be internal, ought to act rather with the affection of the will than with the toil of the intellect.

To fix the will on God, and to repel evil thoughts and temptations in the most tranquil manner that is possible, is the highest pitch of praying.

It is a vulgar error, that in this prayer of rest the faculties operate not, and that the soul is idle and wholly inactive. It operates by the first and chief operation of the intellect, which is simple apprehension enlightened by holy faith, and aided by the Divine gifts of the Holy Spirit. And the will is more apt to continue one act than to multiply many; so that as well the act of the intellect, as that of the will, are so simple, imperceptible, and spiritual, that hardly the soul knows them, and far less reflects upon them.

CHAPTER X.

What the soul ought to do in prayer.

THOU oughtest to go to prayer, that thou mayest deliver thyself wholly up into the hands of God, with perfect resignation, exerting an act of faith; afterwards settling in that holy repose, with quietness, silence, and tranquillity; and endeavouring, for a whole day, a whole year, and thy whole life, to continue that first act of contemplation by faith and love.

If a jewel given to a friend were once put into his hands, it is not necessary to repeat such a donation already made, by daily telling him, "Sir, I give you this jewel; Sir, I give you this jewel;" but to let him keep it, and not take it from him; because, provided he take it not, or design not to take it from him, he hath surely given it him. In the same manner, having once dedicated and lovingly resigned thyself to the will of God, there is nothing else for thee to do but to continue the same, pro-

vided thou takest not back the jewel thou hast once given, by committing some notable fault against his Divine will; though thou oughtest still to exercise thyself outwardly in the external works of thy calling and state, for in so doing thou dost the will of God, and walkest in continual and efficacious prayer. "He always prays," said Theophylact, "who does good works; nor does he neglect prayer, but when he leaves off to be just."

The resolution only of going to prayer, awakens a lively presence of God, which is the preparation to the prayer that is about to be made; or, to say better, is no other than a more efficacious continuation of continual prayer.

Oh that my soul, without adverting or turning to itself, might give itself up in prayer to this holy and spiritual tranquillity. How secure and safe would it be, though it might seem to it that, thus inactive and doing nothing, it were undone.

Divine bounty (says one) granted me this way of prayer, that with a single view of God I felt myself wholly dedicated to Him,

and reposed in Him: He still continued to me that grace, though I opposed it by my infidelity, giving way to fear, and thinking myself unprofitable in that state; for which cause, being willing to do something on my part, I quite spoiled all; and to this present I find myself sometimes assaulted by the same fear, though not in prayer, but in other exercises wherein I am always willing to employ myself a little, though I know very well that the simple view of God is my only remedy and help still, in all the troubles, temptations, and events of this life. When I think to fortify my soul with my own acts, reasonings, and resignations, then I expose myself to new temptations and straits. Besides, I cannot do it without great violence; and it leaves me exhausted and dry, so that it behoves me speedily to return to this simple resignation, knowing that God, in this way, lets me see that it is his will and pleasure that a total stop should be put to the selfish operations of my soul, because he would have all things done by the operation of his own Divine activity. And the quieter I keep my

spirit by this means, the better all things succeed with me; and my crosses and afflictions suddenly vanish. The greater the nakedness and quietness in God, the greater sweetness and strength the soul receiveth, which ought to endeavour to become so pure and simple, that it should have no other support but God alone. I should never look at myself, but walk with eyes shut, leaning on my Beloved, without striving to see or know the way by which He guides me, neither beg any particular favour of Him; but, as entirely undone in myself, rest wholly on Him.

If thou tell me, that many times thou forgettest, during a whole day, to renew thy resignation,—I answer, that, though it seems to thee that thou art diverted from it by attending to the daily occupations of thy vocation, as studying, reading, preaching, eating, drinking, doing business, and the like, thou art mistaken; for the one destroys not the other, nor, by so doing, dost thou neglect to do the will of God, nor to proceed in virtual prayer. Because these occupations are not contrary to his will, nor contrary to thy resig-

nation ; it being certain that God would have thee to eat, study, take pains, do business, &c. So that, to perform these exercises, which are conformed to his will and pleasure, thou departest not out of his presence, nor from thine own resignation.

But if, in prayer or out of it, thou shouldst willingly be diverted or distracted, suffering thyself deliberately to be transported into any passion, then it will be good for thee to revert to God, and return into his Divine presence, renewing the purest acts of faith and resignation. Thou oughtest never to call dryness distraction ; because, if thou support it through with constancy, resting quiet in thine own emptiness, the Lord will work wonders in thee.

Strive, then, when thou comest from prayer, in order to return to it again, not to be distracted nor diverted, but to carry thyself with a total resignation to the Divine will, that God may do with thee and all that thou hast according to his heavenly pleasure, relying on him as on a kind and loving father. Never recall that intention ; and,

though thou be taken up about the affairs of the condition wherein God hath placed thee, yet thou wilt still be in prayer in the presence of God. The good desire is prayer; and if the desire be continued, so is also the prayer.

Thou wilt understand all that has been said by this clear example:—When a man begins a journey to Rome, every step he makes in the progress is voluntary; and nevertheless it is not necessary that at every step he shall express his desire, or exert a new act of the will, saying, “I am going to Rome, I am going to Rome.” Just so, a man having once made the resolution of doing the will of God, and of being in his presence, he still perseveres in that act, so long as he recalls not the same, although he be taken up in hearing, speaking, eating, or in any other external good work or function of his calling and quality.

Before the soul can be fit to enter into the presence of the Divinity, and to be united thereunto, it is to be washed with the precious blood of the Redeemer, and adorned with the riches of his passion.

Our Lord Christ is the only door by which we enter into the pastures of life eternal, and into the vast ocean of the Divinity.

Let the soul, then, when it enters into recollection, place itself at the gate of Divine mercy, occupied with the amiable and sweet remembrance of the cross and passion of the Word that was made man, and died for love; let it stand there with humility, resigned to the will of God, in whatsoever it pleases the Divine Majesty to do with it.

The perfection of the soul consists not in speaking much on God, but in loving Him sufficiently. The love of God has but few words. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

Love consists not in passionate acts, or in tender ejaculations, or yet in the internal acts wherein thou tellest God that thou hast an infinite love for Him and thou lovest Him more than thyself.

What avails it to tell Him, with great zeal and fervour, that thou tenderly and perfectly lovest Him above all things, if at one bitter word or slight injury thou dost not resign

thyself, nor art mortified for the love of Him ?—a manifest proof that thy love was a love in tongue and not in deed.

Peter most affectionately told the Lord, that for his sake he was ready willingly to lay down his life ; but, at the word of a young damsel, he denied Him, and there was an end of his zeal. Mary Magdalene said not a word ; and yet the Lord Himself, taken with her perfect love, became her panegyrist, saying that she had loved much.

CHAPTER XI.

The outward and the inward.

THERE are two sorts of professing Christians —the external and the internal.

Some endeavour to get virtues by many abstinences, by macerations of body, and by mortification of the senses. They give themselves to rigorous penance; they put on sackcloth, chastise the flesh by whips, keeping outwardly silent in the presence of God. This is the external way; but there is not so much as one step towards holiness by it, as experience shows in many who, after fifty years of this external exercise, are void of God and full of themselves, having nothing of a spiritual man, but only the name of such.

Others, truly spiritual, with a total putting off and forgetting even of themselves, do always go with a raised spirit to the presence of the Lord, by the means of pure faith, without image, form, or figure, but with great assurance.

And although in many occasions they feel resistance and temptations, yet they become presently victorious, because, being already souls of proof and endued with Divine strength, the motions of passions cannot last long upon them; and although vehement temptations and troublesome suggestions of the enemy may continue a long time about them, they are all conquered with infinite gain — God being He that fights within them.

These blessed souls live so disinterestedly, that, though they continually receive many graces, yet they are just as if they had not received them, keeping always in the inmost of their hearts a great lowliness and contempt of themselves—always humbled in the depth of their own unworthiness and vileness. In this manner they are always quiet, serene, and possessed with evenness of mind in the midst of all graces and extraordinary favours, as well as in the most rigorous and bitter torments. There is no news that terrifies them—no success that makes them glad; tribulations never disturb them, nor do the continual communications from God make

them vain and conceited ; they remain always full of holy and filial fear, in a wonderful peace, constancy, and serenity.

Such who are only in the external way are solicitous to acquire all virtues by continual and repeated acts thereof, in particular, one after another. The former class expect by their own industry to purge away and destroy their imperfections. They endeavour to root up the strings of self-interests, one after another, by various and contrary exercises ; but though they endeavour ever so much, they never gain their point ; because whatever we do in our own strength is full of imperfection and misery.

But in the latter, as it is the Lord that works, virtue is established, self-attachments are rooted up, imperfections are destroyed, and passions removed. They are afflicted and abhor themselves ; they exercise themselves in a loving fear of God and contempt of themselves, but with a true hope in God and distrust of themselves. Of all the good works that they do and of all that they continually suffer, as well within as without,

they make no manner of account in his divine presence.

But few there are that are willing to embrace contempt, and suffer themselves to be refined. The Lord once said to a soul:—“This way is trod by few; 'tis so high a grace that none deserves it; few walk in it, because it is no other than a death of the senses; and few there be that are willing so to die and be annihilated—in which disposition only this sovereign grace is founded.”

Hereby you will know the great difference which there is between the outward and the inward.

CHAPTER XII.

Denying of self-love.

IT is a saying of Bernard, that to serve God is nothing else but to do good and suffer evil. You must desire no other consolation from God than to end your life for his sake, in the state of true obedience and subjection. Christ our Lord's way was not that of sweetness and softness, nor did He invite us to any such, either by his words or example, when He said, "*He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow me.*" (Matt. xxiv. 26.) The soul that is united to Christ must be conformable to Him, and follow Him in the way of suffering.

Thou wilt scarce begin to relish the sweetness of Divine love in prayer but the enemy with his deceitful craftiness will be kindling in thy heart desires of the desert and solitude, that thou mayest, without anybody's hindrance, spread the sails to continual and delightful prayers. Open thine eyes, and

consider that this counsel and desire is not conformable to the true counsel of Christ our Lord, who has not invited us to follow the sweetness and comfort of our own will, but the denying of ourselves, saying, "*Let him deny himself.*" As if He should say, "He that will follow me, let him part with his own will wholly, and, leaving all things, let him entirely submit to the yoke of obedience and subjection by means of self-denial, which is the truest cross."

Oh, what a great happiness is it for a soul to be subdued and subject!—what great riches is it to be poor!—what a mighty honour to be despised!—what a height is it to be beaten down!—what a comfort is it to be afflicted!—what a credit of knowledge is it to be reputed ignorant!—and, finally, what a happiness of happinesses is it to be crucified with Christ! This is that lot which the apostle gloried in—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Gal. vi. 14.) Let others boast in their riches, dignities, delights, and honours; but to us there is no higher honour than to be denied, despised,

and crucified with Christ. But what a grief is this, that scarce is there one soul which prizes spiritual pleasures and is willing to be denied for Christ, embracing his cross with love, with patience, constancy, peace, and resignation !

To deny one's-self in all things, to follow always that which is contrary to one's own will, are things done by few. Many are those that teach them, but few are they that practise them.

Many souls have undertaken, and daily do undertake, this way; and they persevere all the while they keep the sweet relish of their primitive fervour: but this sweet-ness and sensible delight is scarce over but presently, on being overtaken by a storm of trouble, temptation, and dry-ness, they falter and turn back,—a clear sign that they sought themselves and not God.

May it please God that the souls which have had light, and, by not being constant in dryness, and tribulation, and temptation, have started back, may not be cast into outer darkness with him that had not on

him a wedding garment, for giving himself up to self-love.

This monster must be vanquished, this seven-headed beast of self-love must be beheaded. Everywhere it puts in its head. Sometimes it gets, with an appearance of gratitude, into passionate affection towards the minister; sometimes into affection to most subtle spiritual vain glories, and temporal things, and niceties of honour, which things stick very close; sometimes it cleaves to spiritual pleasures, staying even in the gifts of God and in his graces freely bestowed; sometimes it desires exceedingly the preservation of health, and with disguise to be used well, and its own profit and conveniences; sometimes it adorns itself with very curious subtleties; and lastly, it cleaves with a notable propensity to its own proper judgment and opinion in all things, the roots of which are closely fixed in its own will. All these are effects of self-love, and if they be not denied it is impossible that a man should ever get up to the supreme happiness of the union of love.

CHAPTER XIII.*Of a spiritual martyrdom.*

OH, that thou wouldest understand the great good of tribulation ! This is that which cleanses the soul, produces patience, in prayer inflames it, enlarges it, and puts it upon the exercise of the most sublime acts of charity ; this rejoices the soul, brings it near to God — calls it to, and gives it entrance into, heaven. This is what tries the true servants of God, and renders them sweet, valiant, and constant ; this is it which makes God hear them with speed : “ I cried unto the Lord in my trouble, and he heard me.” (Ps. cxix.) It is this which, of earthly, makes souls heavenly ; of human, divine ; transforming them and uniting them in a wonderful manner with the Lord’s humanity and divinity. It was well said by Augustine, that the life of the soul upon earth is temptation. Blessed is the soul which is always opposed, if it doth constantly resist temptation. This is the

means which the Lord makes use of to humble it, to mortify it, to deny it, to perfect it, and fill it with his Divine gifts ; by this means of tribulation and temptation He finally crowns it and transforms it.

Oh, blessed soul ! if thou knowest how to be content and quiet in the fire of tribulation, and wouldest but let thyself be washed with the bitter waters of affliction, how quickly wouldest thou find thyself rich in heavenly gifts ?—how soon wouldest the Divine bounty make a rich throne in thy soul, and a goodly habitation for thee to refresh and solace thyself in it ?

Know that this Lord hath his repose nowhere but in souls in which the fire of tribulation and temptation hath burnt up the dregs of passions, and in which the bitter water of afflictions hath washed off the filthy spots of inordinate appetites ; in a word, the Lord reposes Himself nowhere but where quietness reigns and self-love is banished.

But thou wilt never arrive at this happy state till thy soul become purified from the disorderly passions of concupiscence, self-esteem, its own desires and thoughts, how

spiritual soever, with many other interests and secret vices which lie hid within thy very soul.

The Lord himself will dispose thee and prepare thee by a way thou understandest not.

Thou wilt find within thyself a passive dryness, darkness, anguish, contradictions, continual resistance, inward desertions, horrible desolations, continual and strong suggestions and vehement temptations of the enemy; finally, thou wilt see thyself so afflicted that thou wilt not be able to lift up thy heart, being full of sorrow and heaviness—not capable, to thy thinking, of the least act of faith, hope, or charity.

Keep constant, oh, blessed soul! keep constant; for it will not be as thou imaginest, nor art thou at any time nearer to God than in such cases of desertion; for although the sun is hid in the clouds, yet it changes not its place, nor a jot the more loses its brightness. The Lord permits this painful desertion in thy soul to purge and polish thee—to cleanse and disrobe thee of thyself, that thou mayest in this

manner be all his, and give thyself wholly up to Him, as his infinite bounty is entirely given to thee, that so thou mayest be his delight; for although thou dost groan, and lament, and weep, yet He is joyful and glad in the most secret and hidden place of thy soul.

CHAPTER XIV.

How to suffer this spiritual martyrdom.

To the end that the earthly soul may become heavenly it must suffer strong temptations—more bitter than those wherewith the martyrs were crowned in the primitive Church.

The martyrs, besides the shortness of their torment, which hardly endured days, were comforted with a clear light and special help, in hope of the near and sure reward. But the desolate soul, that must die in itself, surrounded by temptations, darkness, anguish, affliction, sorrow, and rigid droughts, doth taste of death every moment in its painful temptations and tremendous desolation, without feeling the least comfort, with an affliction so great that the pain of it seems nothing else but a death prolonged and a continual martyrdom ; whereupon, with great reason, it may be said, *that although there be many martyrs, yet there are few souls which follow Christ our*

Lord with peace and resignation in such torments.

Then it was men that martyred them, and God comforted their souls ; but now God hides Himself.

Thy sorrow will seem to be insuperable, and thy afflictions past the power of comfort, and that heaven rains no more upon thee ; thou wilt see thyself begirt with griefs and besieged with sorrows internal, from the darkness of thy powers, from the weakness of thy reasonings ; strong temptations will afflict thee, painful distrusts and troublesome scruples ; nay, light and judgment will forsake thee.

All the creatures will give thee trouble ; spiritual counsels will bring thee pain ; the reading of books, how holy soever, will not comfort thee as it used to do. If they speak to thee of patience, they will exceedingly trouble thee ; the fear of losing God through thy unthankfulness and want of returns will torment thee to the soul. If thou groanest and beggest help of God, thou wilt find, instead of comfort, inward reproof and disfavour,—like another Canaanitish woman,

to whom He made no answer at first, and then seemingly treated her as the creature He was speaking of.

And although at this time the Lord will not abandon thee, because it would be impossible to live one moment without his help, yet the succour will be so secret that thy soul will not know it, nor be capable of hope and consolation.

But if thou, oh, blessed soul! shouldest know how much thou art beloved and defended by the Divine Lord in the midst of thy long torments, thou wouldest find them so sweet, that it would be necessary that God should work a miracle to let thee live. Be constant, oh, happy soul! be constant and of good courage; for however intolerable thou art to thyself, yet thou wilt be protected, enriched, and beloved by that greatest Good, as if He had nothing else to do than to lead thee onward and upward; and if thou dost not turn away, but perseverest constantly, without leaving off thy undertaking, know that thou offerest to God the most acceptable sacrifice.

If from the chaos of nothing his omni-

potence has produced so many wonders, what will He do in thy soul, created after his own image and likeness, if thou keepest constant, quiet, and resigned, with a true knowledge of thy nothingness ?

Afflict not thyself too much, and with inquietude, because these sharp martyrdoms continue ; persevere in humility, for all thy good consists in patience, with rest and resignation. Then wilt thou find the Divine strength to overcome this hard warfare. He is within thee that fighteth for thee ; and He is strength itself.

Afflict not thyself, though God do crucify thee and make trial of thy fidelity ; imitate the woman of Canaan, who, being seemingly rejected, did importune and persevere, humbling herself and following Him, though she were treated as she was. It is necessary to drink the cup, and not go back. If the scales were taken from thine eyes, as they were from Paul's, thou wouldest see the necessity of suffering, and wouldest glory as he did, esteeming more the being crucified than the being an apostle.

Thy real good consists not in enjoying,

but in suffering with quiet and resignation.
We shall be rewarded for our pain, not for the many comforts which we have enjoyed in this world.

CHAPTER XV.

Of another spiritual martyrdom.

THE fire of Divine love burns the soul, and makes it painful with the same love. Sometimes the absence of its Beloved afflicts it; sometimes the sweet, ardent, and welcome weight of the loving and Divine presence torments it. This sweet martyrdom always makes it sigh; sometimes because it enjoys and has its Beloved, the pleasure of having Him also makes it sigh, so that it cannot contain itself; other times, because He does not manifest Himself; again, through the ardent anxiety of seeking, to find and enjoy Him,—all this is sighing, suffering, and dying for love.

Oh, that thou couldest but come to conceive the contrariety of accidents that an enamoured soul suffers! The combat so terrible and strong on one side; so sweet, and melting, and amiable, on the other! The martyrdom so piercing and sharp with which love torments it; and the cross so

painful, and sweet withal, without seeming that ever thou shouldest get free from it whilst thou livest!

Just so much as light and love increases, just so much increases the grief in seeing that good absent which it loves so well. To feel it near itself, is enjoyment; and never to have done knowing and possessing it, consumes its life. It has food and drink near its mouth; whilst it wants both; and cannot be satisfied. It sees itself swallowed up and drowned in a sea of love, whilst the powerful hand that is able to save it is near it, and yet doth not do it; nor doth it know when He will come whom it so much does desire.

Sometimes it hears the voice of its Beloved, which courts and calls it; and a soft and delicate whisper pierces it strongly, so that it is even ready to melt and dissolve in seeing how near it hath Him within itself, and yet how far off from it, whilst it cannot come to possess Him. This inebriates it, stuns it, scares it, and fills it with unsatisfiableness; and therefore love is said to be as strong as death.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of mortification and resignation.

THE most subtle arrow that is shot at us from nature is, to induce us to that which is unlawful, with a pretence that it may be necessary and useful. Oh, how many souls have suffered themselves to be led away, and have lost the Spirit by this gilded cheat! Thou wilt never taste the delicious manna, "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. ii. 17), unless thou dost perfectly overcome thyself—unless thou diest to thyself.

Never disquiet thyself for any accident; for inquietude is the door by which the enemy gets into the soul to rob it of its peace.

Resign and deny thyself wholly; for though true self-denial is harsh at the beginning, it is easy in the middle, and becomes most sweet in the end.

Know, that pure, perfect, and essential love consists in the cross, in self-denial and

resignation, in perfect humility, in poverty of spirit, and in a mean opinion of thyself.

Many there be who, however they have been given to prayer, yet have no relish of God; because in the end of their prayers they are neither mortified nor attend upon God any longer.

An humble and resigned soul seeks no more than merely to please God; and the holy and loving Spirit teaches it everything with his sweet and enlivening unction.

This is that sort of holiness, so much the more rare, as it is more precious in the sight of God. The spiritual ones who walk this way are rare; because there are few in the world who totally deny themselves, to follow Christ crucified with simpleness and nakedness of spirit through the lonesome and thorny ways of the cross, without making reflections upon themselves.

The spiritual man, that lives by God and in Him, is inwardly contented in the midst of his adversities; because the cross and affliction are his life and delight.

Tribulation is a great treasure, wherewith

God honours those that be his in this life ; therefore evil men are necessary for those that are good ; and so are the devils themselves, which, by afflicting us, try to ruin us, but, instead of doing us harm, they do us the greatest good imaginable.

With the wind of tribulation God separates, in the floor of the soul, the chaff from the corn.

Such saints are to be pitied who cannot find in their hearts to believe that tribulation and suffering is their greatest blessing. Vain is the man who doth not suffer, because he is born to toil and suffer ; but much more the friends and elect of God.

Undeceive thyself, and believe that, in order to thy soul's being totally transformed into God, it is necessary for it to be lost, and denied to its own life, sense, knowledge, and power ; and to die living, and not living ; dying, and not dying ; suffering, and not suffering ; resigning up, and not resigning up itself—without self-reflecting on these things.

But, if the soul doth not attend to this continual denying of itself, it will be con-

tinually subject to accidents and passions of the mind, such as judging, murmuring, resenting, excusing, defending itself, in order to keep its honour and reputation,—all which are enemies of peace and of the Spirit.

Know that the diversities of states amongst those that are spiritual consists only in not dying all alike; but in the happy souls who die continually God hath his honour, his blessing, and delights here below.

Great is the difference between doing, suffering, and dying: doing is delightful, and belongs to beginners; suffering, with desire, belongs to those who are proficients; dying always in themselves belongs to those who are accomplished, of which number there are very few in the world.

How happy wilt thou be, if thou hast no other thought but to die thyself! Thou wilt then become not only victorious over thine enemies, but over thyself; in which victory thou wilt certainly find pure love, perfect peace, and Divine wisdom.

Enjoyments and internal peace are the

fruits of the Divine Spirit; and no man gets possession of them if, in the secret closet of his soul, he be not a resigned man.

Thou seest that the pleasures and displeasures of worldlings soon pass away; therefore never endeavour to have them nor to stop in them, for they hurt thy health, disturb thy reason, and disquiet thy spirit.

Amongst other holy counsels which thou must observe, remember well this that follows: Look not upon other men's faults, but thine own; mortify thyself in all things and at all hours; and by this means thou wilt get free from many imperfections, and make thyself master of great virtues.

Mortify thyself in not judging ill of anybody at any time; because the suspicion of thy neighbour disturbs the purity of thy heart, discomposes it, and takes away its repose.

Never wilt thou have perfect resignation, if thou mindest human respects, and reflectest upon the little idol of what people say. The cause why God permits grievances to fall on us is, to humble and annihilate us, and to make us live wholly resigned.

Hold it as a true maxim, that nobody can do a grievance or injury to him who despises himself—to him that is nothing in his own account.

Finally, hope, suffer, be silent, and patient. Let nothing affright thee. All things will pass away; God only is He that is unchangeable. Patience will bring about all. He that hath God, hath all things; and he that hath Him not, hath nothing.

CHAPTER XVII.

The soul must know its misery.

If the soul did not experience its own faults, it would never come to understand its own misery, though it hears men speak, and reads spiritual books: nor can it ever obtain this precious and solid peace if it do not first know its own miserable weakness; because the remedy is unknown where there is no clear knowledge of the defect. God will suffer in thee sometimes one fault, sometimes another, that, by this knowledge of thyself, by seeing thyself so often fall, thou mayest know that thou art a mere nothing. And that thou mayest the better dive into this mystery, and see what thou art, I will try to undeceive thee in some of thy manifold imperfections.

Thou art so quick and nice, that, it may be, if thou dost but trip as thou walkest, or findest thy way molested, thou feelest even hell itself. If thou art denied thy due, or thy pleasure opposed, thou presently briskest

up with a warm resentment of it. If thou spiest a fault in thy neighbour, instead of pitying him and thinking that thou thyself art liable to the same failing, thou reprovest him indiscreetly ; if thou seest a thing convenient for thee, and canst not compass it, thou growest sad and full of sorrow ; if thou receivest a slight injury from thy neighbour, thou chidest him, and complainest at it, insomuch that for every trifle thou art inwardly and outwardly discomposed, and so losest thy peace.

Thou wouldest be patient, but with another's patience ; and if thy impatience still continues, thou layest the fault with much pains upon thy neighbour, without considering that thou art intolerable to thyself ; and when thy rancour is over, thou cunningly dost return to appear virtuous, giving documents, and dictating spiritual sayings, with subtle artifice, without mending thy past faults. Although thou willingly dost condemn thyself, reproving thy faults before others ; yet thou dost it more to justify thyself to Him that sees thy faults, that thou mayest return again to the former esteem of

thyself, than through any effect of perfect humility.

Other times thou dost subtilly allege that it is not through thy fault, but through a zeal for holiness, that thou complainest of thy neighbour. Thou believest for the most part that thou art virtuous, constant, and courageous, even to the giving up of thy life into the tyrant's hand, solely for the sake of Divine love; yet thou canst scarce hear the least word of anger but presently thou dost afflict, and trouble, and disquiet thyself. These are all industrious engines of self-love, and the secret pride of thy soul. Know, therefore, that self-love reigns in thee, and is the greatest hinderance to thine obtaining this precious peace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Wherein is shown and discovered what is the false humility, and what is the true; with the effects of each.

THOU must know that there are two sorts of humility; one false and counterfeit, the other true. The feigned humility is like fountains, or falling waters, which rebound again as high as before they fell. Such persons avoid esteem and honour, that so they may be humble. They say of themselves that they are very evil, that they may be thought good; and, though they know their own misery, yet they are loath that others should know it. This is dissembled and feigned humility, and nothing but secret pride.

Such have the true humility, who never think of it, but judge humbly of themselves; these persons act with courage and patience; they live and die in God; they mind not themselves nor the creatures; they are constant and quiet in all things; they suffer

molestation with joy, desiring more of it, that they may imitate their dear and despised JESUS ; they covet to be made the mock and game of the world ; they are contented with what God allots them, and are convinced of their faults with a peaceable confusion ; they are not humbled by the strength of reason, but by the affection of the will ; there is no honour that they look after ; no injury that disturbs them ; no trouble that vexes them ; no prosperity that makes them proud.

And that thou mayest be acquainted with true humility, know that it doth not consist in external acts, in mean clothes, in speaking submissively, in shutting the eyes, in affectionate sighings ; nor in condemning of thy ways, calling thyself miserable, to give others to understand that thou art humble : it consists only in the contempt of thyself, and in a willingness to be despised, with a low and profound knowledge of thyself, so as not to concern thyself whether thou art esteemed humble or no, though an angel should reveal such a thing to thee.

The torrent of light, wherewith the Lord by his grace enlightens the soul, doth two things :

it discovers the greatness of God, and at the same time shows the soul its own misery, insomuch that no tongue is able to express the depth in which it is overwhelmed, being desirous that every one should know its baseness; and it is so far from vain-glory and complacency, that it sees this grace of God to be his mere goodness, and nothing but his mercy, which is pleased to take pity on it.

Thou shalt never be hurt by men or devils, but only by thyself, by thy own proper pride, and the violence of thy passions. Take heed, therefore, of thyself, for thou, of thyself, art (to thyself) the greatest devil of all.

Have no mind to be esteemed, when God incarnate was called fool, drunkard, and was said to have a devil. Oh, the folly of Christians! That we should be willing to enjoy happiness, without being willing to imitate Him on the cross, in reproaches, humility, and poverty!

The truly humbled man is at rest and ease in his heart, possessing himself in peace and quietness; only looking for, with all humility, the single pleasure of God, as well

in life as in death. Things without do no more disquiet him, than if they never were. The cross to him, and even death itself, are delights, though he make no such show outwardly. But oh! whom do we speak of? for few there are of these sort of humble men in the whole world.

Hope thou, and desire, and suffer, and die, without anybody knowing it; for herein consists the humble and perfect love. Oh, how much peace wilt thou find in thy soul, if thou dost profoundly humble thyself, and even embrace contempt!

Thou wilt never be perfectly humble, though thou knowest thy own misery, unless thou desirest all men should know it too; then thou wilt avoid praises, embrace injuries, despise everything that makes a fair show, even thine own self; and if any tribulation comes upon thee, then thou wilt blame none for it, but judge that it comes from God's hand, as the Giver of every good.

If thou wouldest bear thy neighbour's faults, cast thine eye upon thine own; and if thou thinkest to thyself that thou hast

made any progress by thyself, know that thou art not humble, nor hast yet made one step in the way of the Spirit.

Finally, if thou wouldest be blessed, learn to despise thyself, and to be despised by others.

CHAPTER XIX.

Maxims whereby to know a simple, humble, and true heart.

ENCOURAGE thyself to be humble, embracing tribulations as instruments of thy good ; rejoice in contempt, and desire that God may be thy only refuge, comfort, and protector.

None, let him be ever so great in this world, can be greater than he who lives in the love and favour of God ; and therefore the truly humble man despises whatever there is in the world, even himself, and puts his only trust and repose in God.

The truly humble man suffers internal troubles quietly and patiently ; and he is the man that makes great progress in a little time, like a ship that sails before the wind.

The truly humble man finds God in all things ; so that, whatever contempt, injury, or affront comes to him by means of the creatures, he receives it with great peace

and internal quiet, as sent from the Divine hand.

He is not yet arrived at profound humility, who is pleased with praise, though he neither desires nor seeks it, but rather avoids it; because, to an humble heart, praises are bitter crosses.

He has no internal humility, who has not a low and profound sense and knowledge of his own vileness, rottenness, and misery.

He that is anxious to make excuses and replies, has not a simple and humble heart, especially if he does it with superiors; because replies grow from a secret pride that reigns in the soul, and causes its ruin.

Perfidiousness supposes little submission, and still less humility; and, both together, they are the fuel of unquietness, discord, and disturbance.

The humble heart is not cast down by its imperfections; though they grieve it to the soul, because they are against its loving Lord. Nor is he concerned that he cannot do great things; for he always stands in his own nothingness and misery; nay, he wonders at himself that he can do any virtuous

thing, and immediately thanks the Lord for it with a true knowledge that it is God that does all, and remains dissatisfied with what he does himself.

The truly humble man, though he sees all, yet he looks upon nothing to judge it, because he judges ill only of himself.

The truly humble man doth always find an excuse for him that mortifies him, at least when with a good intention. Who, therefore, would be angry with a man of good intention?

As much (nay, more) doth false humility displease God as notorious pride; because false humility has hypocrisy added to it.

The truly humble man, though everything falls out contrary to him, is neither disquieted nor afflicted by it; because he is prepared for the same, and thinks he deserves no less. He is not disquieted by the troublesome thoughts wherewith the devil seeks to torment him, nor with temptations, tribulations, and desertions; but he rather acknowledges his unworthiness, and is satisfied that the Lord chastises him by the devil's means, though he be a vile instrument: all

he suffers, seems nothing to him ; and he never doeth anything that he thinks worth any regard.

He who has attained inward and perfect humility, although he is disturbed at nothing, as one that abhors himself because he knows his imperfection in everything, his ingratitude and misery, yet suffers a great cross in enduring himself. This is the sign by which to know true humility of heart. But the happy soul which has attained to this holy hatred of itself, lives overwhelmed, drowned, and swallowed up in the depth of its own nothingness ; out of which the Lord raises him, by communicating to him Divine wisdom, and also by filling him with light, peace, tranquillity, and love.

CHAPTER XX.*Alone with God.*

EXTERIOR solitude the Lord did not mean, when He spake by his prophet (Hos. ii. 14), "I will bring her into solitude, and speak comfortably to her;" but He meant the interior solitude wherein the soul, in a perfect nakedness of all the affections, desires, and thoughts of one's own will, reposes with a sweet and inward serenity in the arms of its Supreme Good.

Oh, what infinite room of liberty is there in a soul that is got into this Divine solitude ! Oh, what inward, what retired, what secret, what spacious, what vast enlargements ! The Lord converses, and communicates Himself with the soul ; He fills it with Himself, because it is empty ; clothes it with light and with his love, because it is naked ; lifts it up, because it is low ; and unites it with Himself, and transforms it, because it is alone.

O delightful solitude, and centre of eternal

blessings! O mirror, in which the Eternal Father is always beheld! There is great reason to call thee solitude; for thou art so much alone, that there is scarce a soul that looks after thee, that loves and knows thee. O Divine Lord! how is it that souls do not seek this glory on earth? How come they to lose so great a good, through the love and desire of some poor created things? Blessed soul! how happy wilt thou be, if thou dost but leave all for God! Seek Him only, breathe after none but Him; let Him only have thy sight. Desire nothing, and then nothing can trouble thee; and if thou dost desire any good, how spiritual soever it be, let it be in such a manner that thou mayest not be disquieted if thou receivest it not.

If, in this manner, thou wilt give thy soul to God, taken off from the world, free and alone, thou wilt be the happiest creature upon earth, because the Most High has his secret habitation in this holy solitude. In this paradisaical retreat is enjoyed the conversation of God; and it is only in this internal retirement that his marvellous, powerful, and Divine voice is heard.

If thou wouldest enter into this heaven on earth, forget every care and every selfish thought ; get out of thyself, that the love of God may live in thy soul.

Dedicate thyself wholly to thy Creator, and offer thyself in sacrifice with peace and quietness of spirit. Know that the more the soul disrobes itself, the more it becomes clothed with God ; and the more retired from and empty of itself the soul gets to be, the more the Divine Spirit fills it.

There is not a more blessed life than this. God gives himself wholly to the creature, and the creature wholly to God, by an intimate and sweet union of love. Oh, how few are they that come to relish this true solitude !

To make the soul truly solitary, it ought to forget even itself ; otherwise it will never be able to make any near approach to God. Many persons leave and forsake all things, but they do not forsake their own liking, their own will, nor themselves ; and therefore these truly solitary ones are so few. Be assured, if the soul does not cease from its own appetites and desires, from its own will,

from spiritual gifts, and from all its own selfish rest, it never can obtain this high felicity.

Go on, blessed soul! go on, without stopping, to this blessedness. God will renew thee, change thee, fill thee, clothe thee, and reveal in thee a new and heavenly kingdom, full of joy, peace, content, and serenity.

CHAPTER XXI.*Divine repose.*

You must know that when once the soul is willing to die in good earnest to its passions and self-operations, then God is wont to take it to himself, and (beyond its own knowledge) to elevate it into a complete repose, where he sweetly and inwardly infuses into it his light, his love, and his strength, enkindling and inflaming it with a true disposition to all manner of virtue.

There the Divine Bridegroom, suspending its powers, causes it to sleep with a most sweet and pleasant rest ; there it sleeps, and quietly receives and enjoys a most lovely and charming calm. There the soul, raised and lifted up to this state, is united to its greatest Good, without costing it any trouble or pains for this union. There, in that supreme region and sacred temple of the soul, the Supreme Good takes its complacency, manifests itself, and makes itself to

be enjoyed by the creature, in a way above sense and all human understanding.

The soul, coming to itself again from these sweet and Divine embracings, becomes rich in light, and love, and a mighty esteem of the Divine greatness, with a deep sense and knowledge of its own misery, finding itself all divinely changed.

This repose, therefore, arises from a known and inward manifestation which God gives of Himself, of his goodness, of his peace, of his sweetness. The object we contemplate is purely God ; it is God only that delights, God that draws us, God that sweetly raises us in a spiritual and most pure manner. An admirable gift, which the Divine Majesty bestows on whom He will, as He will, and when He will, and what time He will, though the state of this life be rather a state of the cross, of patience, of humility, and of suffering, than of enjoying.

Never wilt thou enjoy this Divine ambrosia unless thou art advancing in inward mortification and in creature-forgetfulness. How is it possible to hear the sweet, inward, and powerful voice of God in the midst of the noise

and tumults of the creatures?* And how can the pure Spirit be heard in the midst of creaturely tumults and uproars? If the soul will not continually die to itself, denying all its carnal self-satisfactions,—its contemplation can be no more than mere vanity, vain complacency, and self-presumption.

* He does not mean that we ought to withdraw from man's presence; for he himself was continually mingling with his fellows, telling them of Christ and of his salvation: but he means that if our salt is to have any savour, it can be got only in the soul's lonely fellowship with God. The lamp must be trimmed by the hand of the High Priest, if its light is to "so shine that men, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father which is in heaven."

CHAPTER XXII.

Continues the same matter.

God doth not always communicate Himself with equal abundance. Sometimes He grants this grace more than He doth at other times ; because, this gift being purely his grace, He gives it when He pleases, and as He pleases ; —so that no general rule can be applied to it, nor any limits to his Divine greatness.

Sometimes the Lord gives greater light to the understanding ; sometimes greater love to the will. The soul must receive what God gives it, as He judges proper ; because His Majesty is Lord : He possesses and fills it, and works in it powerfully and sweetly, without any of its own self-industry or knowledge ; insomuch that, before ever it is aware of this so great mercy, it is gained, convinced, and divinely changed.

Our human spirit is unwilling to die to itself, but loves to be doing and discoursing after its own way, being in love with its own actions. A man had need to have great

fidelity, in divesting himself of selfishness, to get a perfect and passive capacity for the Divine influences.

Thou must labour in thy soul for a perfect divesting of all which is not God,—not seeking any other end or interest, within or without, but his Divine will: in a word, a total and absolute abandoning of thyself into the hands of God, with a perfect submission to his holy will, to be occupied according to his pleasure and disposition, receiving what He ordains thee.

At no time must thou look at the effects which are wrought in thy soul; because it would be a hinderance to the Divine operations which enrich it: all that thou hast to do, is to press after self-indifference, resignation, and forgetfulness. And, without thy being sensible of it, the Supreme Good will give thy soul a fit disposition for the practice of all virtues, a true love of the cross, of self-contempt, and still greater and stronger desires after heavenliness.

CHAPTER XXIII.*God's Trainings.*

AT first, God generally fills the soul with sensible pleasures ; because it is so frail and weak, that, without this preventive consolation, it cannot take wing towards the fruition of heavenly things.

The more the things of heaven are delighted in, the more they are desired ; and from spiritual pleasures follows the desire of enjoying heavenly and Divine blessings, and a contempt of worldly ones. From these desires follows the inclination of following Christ our Lord ; the steps being charity, humility, meekness, patience, self-contempt, the cross, prayer.

When the soul is filled with God, it is quiet, and satisfied only with Divine love. This casts out all fear ; the soul is so replenished with Divine love, and resigned up in such a manner to the Divine good pleasure, that it would go willingly anywhere if it did but know it to be the will of the

Most High. It feels such a secure bond of the Divine union, that it seems to it an impossible thing to be separated from its Beloved and from its infinite treasure.

The soul is enkindled; and, being enkindled, is anointed; being anointed, is raised; and, being raised, finds repose.

In the first step, a Divine and ardent ray enkindles the Divine affections, drying up those which are but human. The second is—a sweet and spiritual unction, diffusing itself through all the soul—teaches it, strengthens it, and disposes it to receive and contemplate the Divine truth. The third is—the inner man is elevated above itself, getting into the clear fountain of pure love. The fourth—the soul sweetly contemplates the Divine truth, rising still from one clearness to another, from one light to another, from knowledge to knowledge, being guided by the Divine Spirit. Hence comes a savoury pleasure of the Divine sweetness, issuing forth from the plentiful and precious fountain of the Holy Ghost; and hence also a sweet and admirable tranquillity, arising from the victory obtained after inward fight-

ings and continual prayer. And this very, very few have experience of. Here the abundance of joy and peace is so great, that the soul seems to be in a sweet sleep, solacing and reposing itself on the Divine breast of love.

Many other steps there are; though to him who experiences nothing of them, they are all no more than colours to a blind man, or than music to a deaf man. In a word, by these steps we get up to the chamber and repose of the pacific King—the true Solomon.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The inner man.

THE signs to know the inner man by are these three :—The first, if the understanding produces no other thoughts than those which the light of faith produces; and the will begets no other acts of love than of God, and of what leads to Him. The second, if, when he ceases from an external work in which he was employed, the understanding and the will are presently and easily turned to God. The third, if he carries himself orderly in outward things as if he were entering into the world again, fearing to embroil himself in it unless when charity requires it of him.

Such a soul sees none but God, and itself in Him; loving Him with quietness, and peace, and true love. God affectionately speaks to it, and manifests in it the new kingdom of his true peace and joy.

It preserves its peace unbroken, though outwardly it may meet with combats. Though

sometimes it may be naked, forsaken, fought against, and desolate,—this is only the fury of the storm, which threatens and rages nowhere but without.

This love has a savoury and experimental knowledge of the greatness of God, and of its own nothingness, and an ardent desire of being consumed in this Divine love-fire.

From this two effects arise: the first is a great courage to suffer for God; the second is a certain hope or assurance that it can never lose Him, nor be separated from Him.

Here in this soul the beloved Jesus hath his paradise, to which we may ascend, standing and conversing on the earth. And if thou desirest to know who he is, that is altogether drawn to this enlightened simplification in God,—I tell thee, it is he who, in adversity, in disquiet of spirit, and in the want of necessaries, stands firm and unshaken. These constant and inward souls live in God, and by God himself; they shine brighter than a thousand suns; they are beloved by the Son of God; they are the darlings of God the Father.

By three signs, a mind that is purged is

to be known :—The first sign is diligence, which is a strength of mind that banishes all neglect and sloth, that it may be disposed with earnestness and confidence to the pursuit of virtue. The second is severity, which likewise is a strength of mind against concupiscence. The third is benignity and sweetness of mind, which drives away all rancour, envy, aversion, and hatred against one's neighbour.

CHAPTER XXV.*Of Divine Wisdom.*

DIVINE wisdom is an intellectual and infused knowledge of the Divine perfections and of things eternal. The men who are scholastical entertain themselves in the knowledge of the things of the world ; and the wise live swallowed up in God himself.

The wise man says of wisdom, that it brought him all good things at once :—" All good things together came to me with her, and innumerable riches in her hands."

You must know—the greatest part of mankind live by opinion, and judge according to the deceivableness of imagination and sense ; but the man that is wise judges everything according to the real verity which is in it ; whose business is to understand, conceive, penetrate into, and transcend every created being, even himself.

It is a great property in a wise man to do much, and to say little.

Wisdom is discovered in the works and

words of the wise ; he is known in all his doings, like a quiet and still water, in which wisdom shines with clearness.

The understanding of spiritual truths is secret, and shut up from men who are purely scholastical, unless they be humble ; because it is the science of saints, and none know it but those who heartily love and seek their own contempt. Such souls dive even to the profoundest apprehensions of the Divinity ; and the more sensually men live, according to flesh and blood, the greater distance are they from this spiritual science.

It is commonly seen, that in the man which hath much scholastical and speculative knowledge, Divine wisdom doth not predominate ; yet they make an admirable composition when they both meet together. Persons of learning, who, by God's mercy, have attained to this spiritual science, are worthy of veneration.

The external actions of the spiritual and wise are ordered prudently by them.

The sermons of men of learning who want the Spirit, though they are made up of divers stories, elegant descriptions, acute

discourses, and exquisite proofs, yet are by no means the Word of God, but the word of men, plated over with false gold. These preachers spoil Christians, feeding them with wind and vanity ; and so they are, both of them, void of God.

These teachers feed their hearers with the wind of hurtful subtleties, giving them stones instead of bread, leaves instead of fruit, and unsavoury earth mixed with poisoned honey, instead of true food. These are such who hunt after honour, raising up an idol of reputation and applause, instead of seeking God's glory, and the spiritual edification of men.

Those that preach with zeal and sincerity, preach for God ; those that preach without them, preach for themselves. Those that preach the Word of God with the Spirit, make it take impression in the heart ; but those that preach it without the Spirit, carry it no farther than to the ear.

He is neither the greatest saint, nor the wisest man, that knows the truth most, but he that practises it most.

It is a constant maxim, that Divine wis-

dom begets humility; and that which is acquired by the learned begets pride.

Holiness doth not consist in forming high, subtle, and learned conceptions of the attributes of God, but in the love of God, and in self-denial. Therefore it is frequently observed that holiness is more amongst the simple and humble than amongst the learned. How many poor old women are there in the world, who have little or nothing of human science, but are rich in the love of God! How many divines do we see that are over head and ears in their vain wisdom, and yet are quite destitute of true light and love!

Remember that it is always better to speak like one that learns, and not like one that knows. Count it a greater honour to be reputed an ignorant man, than a man of wisdom and prudence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Treating of the same.

THERE are two ways which lead to the knowledge of God; the one remote, the other near. The learned, who follow scientific speculation, by the sweetness of their learned discourses get up to God by this means as well as they can, that by this help they may be able to love Him. But none of those who follow this way, which is called *scholastical*, ever arrive, by this only, at transformation, simplicity, light, peace, tranquillity, and love, as he doth who is conducted by Divine grace.

These men of learning who are merely scholastical, do not know what the Spirit is; nay, some there are which do even condemn this heavenly science, because they neither understand nor relish it.

The reason why some divines do not taste its sweetness is, because they enter not in at the gate St. Paul points to, when he says (1 Cor. iii. 18)—“If any one among you seem to

himself to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise ;" let him show his humility by reputing himself ignorant.

It is a general rule, and also a maxim in spiritual theology, that the practice ought to be gotten before the theory—that there ought to be some experimental progress, before a search after the knowledge of it, and the investigation of its nature.

Although spiritual knowledge does commonly belong to the humble and simple, yet, notwithstanding that, men of learning are not incapable of it, if they do not seek themselves, nor set any great value upon their own artificial knowledge ; but rather (if they can) forget it, as if they never had it, and only make use of it in its own proper place and time, for preaching and disputing when that is necessary, and afterwards give up their minds to the simple and naked contemplation of God.

The study which is not ordered for God's glory only is but a short way to hell ; not through the study, but through the wind of pride, which begets it. Miserable are the greatest part of men at this time, whose

only study is to satisfy the unsatisfiable curiosity of nature.

Many seek God, and find him not; because they are more moved by curiosity than by a sincere, pure, and upright intention. They desire spiritual comforts more than God himself; and as they seek Him not with truth, they find neither Him nor spiritual pleasures.

The Spirit of Divine wisdom fills men with sweetness, governs them with courage, and enlightens those with excellence who are subject to its direction. Where the Divine Spirit dwells, there is always simplicity, and a holy liberty. But craft and double-mindedness, deceit, artifice, policy, and worldly respects, are hell itself to wise and sincere men.

Know, that he who would attain to this spiritual science must be denied and taken off from four things: first, from the creatures; secondly, from temporal things; thirdly, from the very gifts of the Holy Ghost; fourthly, from himself.

God is more satisfied with the affection of the heart than with worldly science. It is

one thing to cleanse the heart of all that captivates and pollutes it, and another thing to do a thousand things, though good and holy, without minding that purity of heart which is the main of all for the attaining of Divine wisdom.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of true self-denial and its blessedness.

THOU must know that this work is founded only in two principles: the first is, to keep one's-self and all worldly things in a low esteem and value; the second is, a great esteem of God—to love, adore, and follow Him without the least interest of one's own, let it be ever so holy. From these two principles will arise a full conformity to the Divine will.

As the soul makes continual progress in knowing its own meanness, it must advance in the way of annihilation, by loathing and abhorring honour, dignity, and praise,—there being no reason that dignity and honour should be given to vileness and mere nothingness.

To the soul that is sensible of its own vileness, it appears an impossible thing to deserve anything; it is rather confounded, and knows itself unworthy of honour and praise; it embraces, with an equal mind, all

occasions of contempt, persecution, infamy, shame, and affront, as truly deserving of such reproaches ; and, above all, it is glad of contempt and affronts, because by these things God is greatly glorified.

Such a soul as this always chooses the lowest place, being convinced that the meanest thing is beyond its deserts, and acknowledging itself also unworthy even of that. This is the practice that brings the soul to the true annihilation of sinful self, knowing itself to be nothing, that it can do nothing, and that it is worth nothing. From hence follows a dying to itself and to its senses, in many ways and at all times.

You must know that this annihilation, to make it perfect in the soul, must be in a man's own judgment, in his will, in his works, inclinations, desires, thoughts, and in itself ; so that the soul must find itself dead to its own will, desire, endeavour, understanding, and thought ; willing, as if it did not will ; desiring, as if it did not desire ; understanding, as if it did not understand ; thinking, as if it did not think, without inclining to anything ; em-

bracing equally contempts and honours, benefits and corrections. Oh, what a happy soul is that which thus lives no longer in itself—because God lives in it! And now it may most truly be said of it that it is a renewed Phœnix, because it is changed, spiritualised, transformed. Old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new.

Endeavour, oh soul! to be always buried in that poverty. This nothing and this self-felt poverty is the means whereby the Lord works wonders in thy soul. Clothe thyself with this nothing and with this poverty, and see that this poverty and this nothing be thy continual food and habitation, even to the casting down thyself low therein ; and then, I assure thee, that thou being in this manner nothing, the Lord will be all in all in thy soul.

Why, thinkest thou, do an infinite number of souls hinder the abundant current of the Divine gifts ? It is only because they would be doing something, and have a desire to be great; all this is a departing from internal humility and from their own nothing, and

therefore they prevent those wonders which infinite Goodness would work in them. They betake themselves to the very gifts of the Spirit, and there they stick, that they may come out from the centre of nothing ; and so the whole work is spoiled. They seek not God with truth, and therefore they find Him not ; for thou must know, that there is no finding of Him but in under-valuing of our own selves and in nothing.

We seek ourselves every time we get out of our nothing. Creep in as far as ever thou canst into the truth of thy nothing, and then nothing will disquiet thee ; nay, thou wilt be humble and abased, losing openly thine own reputation and esteem.

Oh, what a strong bulwark wilt thou find in this nothing ! Who can ever afflict thee if once thou dost retire into this fortress ? Because the soul which is despised by itself, and in its own knowledge is nothing, is not capable of receiving grievance or injury from anybody. The soul which keeps within its nothingness is internally silent—lives resigned in every trial whatsoever, by thinking it less than what it doth deserve. It

shuns the suspicion of its neighbour—never looks at other people's faults, but its own—is free from abundance of imperfections—and becomes commander of great virtue. Whilst the soul keeps still and quiet in its nothingness, it perfects it, it enriches it, the Lord draws his own image and likeness in it, without anything to hinder it.

By the way of nothing thou must come to lose thyself in God ; and happy wilt thou be if thou canst so lose thyself ; then thou wilt get and find thyself again most certainly. In this same sanctuary of nothing simplicity is acquired, interior recollection is possessed, quiet is obtained, and the heart is cleansed. Oh, what a treasure wilt thou find if thou shalt once fix thy habitation in nothing ! And if thou once gettest but fixed into the centre of nothing, thou wilt never concern thyself with anything that is without (the step that so many thousand souls do stumble at), unless it be what thine office calls thee to.

If thou dost but get shut up in nothing (where the blows of adversity can never come), nothing will vex thee or break thy

peace. This is the way of getting to the command of thyself, because perfect and true dominion do only govern in nothing. With the helmet of nothing, thou wilt be too hard for strong temptations and the terrible suggestions of the envious adversary.

Knowing that thou art nothing, that thou canst do nothing, and art worth just nothing, thou wilt quietly embrace passive drynesses, thou wilt endure desolations, thou wilt undergo spiritual martyrdoms,—dying in thyself many ways, at all times, and all hours.

Keeping thyself in nothing, thou wilt bar the door against everything that is not of God; thou wilt retire also from thine ownself, and walk in that internal solitude where the Divine Bridegroom speaks to the heart of his bride, teaching her high and Divine wisdom.

By this gate thou must enter into the happy land of the living, where thou wilt find the greatest good, the breadth of charity, the beauty of righteousness, the strait line of equity and justice.

Walk, therefore, in this safe path, and

endeavour to overwhelm thyself in this nothing; endeavour to lose thyself, to sink deep into it, if thou hast a mind to be transformed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Rejoice evermore.

THE soul being now renewed with perfect nakedness, finds in itself a profound peace and a sweet rest, which brings it to such a perfect union of love that it is joyful all over; and such a soul as this is already arrived at such a happiness that it neither wills nor desires anything but what its Beloved wills; it conforms itself to his will in all emergencies, as well in comfort as in anguish, and rejoices also in everything to do the Divine good pleasure.

There is nothing but what comforts it; nor doth it want anything but what it can well want. To die is enjoyment to it, and to live is its joy. It is as contented here upon earth as it can be in paradise; it is as glad under privation as it can be in possession—in sickness as it can be in health, because it knows that this is the will of its Lord. This is its life, this is its glory, its paradise, its peace, its repose, its

rest, its consolation, and highest happiness.

If it were necessary to such a soul as this, which is gotten up by this way to the region of peace, to make its choice, it would choose desolation before comfort, contempt before honour,—because the loving Jesus made great esteem of reproach and pain. If at the first it endured hunger for the blessings of heaven—if it thirsted for God—if it had the fear of losing Him—the lamentation of heart and the fightings of the devil,—now things are altered, and hunger is turned into satisfying, the thirst into satiety, the fear into assurance, the sadness into joy, the weeping into merriment, and the fierce fighting into the greatest peace. Oh, happy soul! that enjoys here on earth so great a felicity! Thou must know that these kind of souls (though they are few) are the strong pillars which support the Church, and such as abate the Divine indignation.

And now this soul, that is entered into the heaven of peace, knows itself to be full of God and his supernatural gifts; because

it lives grounded in a pure love, receiving equal pleasure in light and darkness, in night and day, in affliction and consolation.

And although the Prince of Darkness makes all the assaults of hell against it, with horrible temptations, yet it makes head against them, and stands like a strong pillar—no more happening to it by them than happens to a high mountain and a deep valley in the time of storm and tempest.

The valley is darkened with thick clouds, fierce tempests of hail, thunder, lightning, and hail-stones, which looks like the picture of hell; at the same time the lofty mountain glitters by the bright beams of the sun in quietness and serenity, continuing clear like heaven, immovable, and full of light.

The same happens to this blessed soul: the valley of the inferior part below is suffering tribulations, combats, darkness, desolations, torments, martyrdoms, and suggestions; and, at the same time, on the lofty mountain of the higher part of the soul the true Sun casts its beams—it inflames and enlightens it, and makes it become clear,

peaceable, resplendent, quiet, serene, and a mere ocean of joy.

So great, therefore, is the quiet of this soul, so great is the peace of its spirit, so great the serenity and cheerfulness that is within, that a ray and glimmering of God does redound even to the very body.

This is the rich and hidden treasure ; this is the lost piece of silver mentioned by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel ; this is the blessed life, the happy life, the true life, and true blessedness here below. Oh, thou lovely greatness, that surpasest the knowledge of the sons of men ! Oh, excellent supernatural life, how admirable and unspeakable art thou, for thou art the very secret cabinet of blessedness ! Oh, how much dost thou raise a soul from earth, which loses in its view all the vile things of earth ! Thou art poor to look upon, but inwardly thou art full of wealth ; thou seemest low, but art exceeding high ; in a word, thou art that which makest men live a life divine here below. Give me, O Lord, thou greatest goodness, give me a good portion of this heavenly happiness and true

peace, which the world, as it is sensual, is neither capable of understanding nor receiving — which the world cannot receive.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A mournful exclamation and lamentable moan to God for the small number of souls that attain the Divine transformation.

OH, Divine Majesty, in whose presence the pillars of heaven do quake and tremble ; oh, thou goodness more than infinite, in whose love the seraphims burn ! give me leave, O Lord, to lament our blindness and ingratitude. We all live in mistakes, seeking the foolish world, and forsaking thee, who art our God. We all forsake thee, the Fountain of Living Waters, for the fetid cesspool of the world.

Oh, we children of men, how long shall we follow after lying and vanity ? Who is it that hath thus deceived us that we should forsake God, our greatest good ? Who is it that speaks the most truth to us ? Who is it that loves us most ? Who defends us most ? Who is it that doth more to show Himself a friend ? Who more tender to

show Himself a husband, and more good to be a father? That our blindness should be so great, that we should all forsake this greatest and infinite goodness!

Oh, Divine Lord, how few souls are there in the world who serve thee fully! How small is the number of those who are willing to suffer that they may follow Christ crucified—that they may embrace the cross—that they may deny and condemn themselves! Oh, what a scarcity of souls are there who are disinterested and totally naked! How few are those souls who are dead to themselves and alive to God—who are totally resigned to his Divine good pleasure! How few those, who are adorned with simple obedience, profound knowledge of themselves, and true humility! How few those, who with an entire indifference give up themselves into the hands of God, to do what He pleases with them! How few are there of those souls who be of simple and disinterested hearts, and who, putting off their own understanding, knowledge, desire, and will, do long for self-

denial and daily dying ! Oh, what a scarcity of souls is there who are willing to let the Divine Creator work in them, that they may suffer, in order that they may not suffer ; and die that they may not die ! How few are the souls who are willing to forget themselves, to have their hearts stripped from their own affections, their own desires, their own satisfactions, their own love and judgments !—that are willing to be led by the highway of self-denial and the internal road !—that are willing to be annihilated, dying to themselves and to their senses !—that are willing to let themselves be emptied, purified, and unclothed, that God may fill, clothe, and perfect them ! In a word, how small, O Lord, is the number of those souls who are, to their own wisdom, blind, deaf, and dumb !

Oh, the shame of us, the children of Adam, who for a thing of mere vileness do despise true felicity and hinder our greatest good, the rich treasure of infinite goodness ! Great reason has Heaven to lament that there are so few souls to follow its precious

pathway. "The ways of Sion mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts." (Lam. i. 4.) "But him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.)



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